

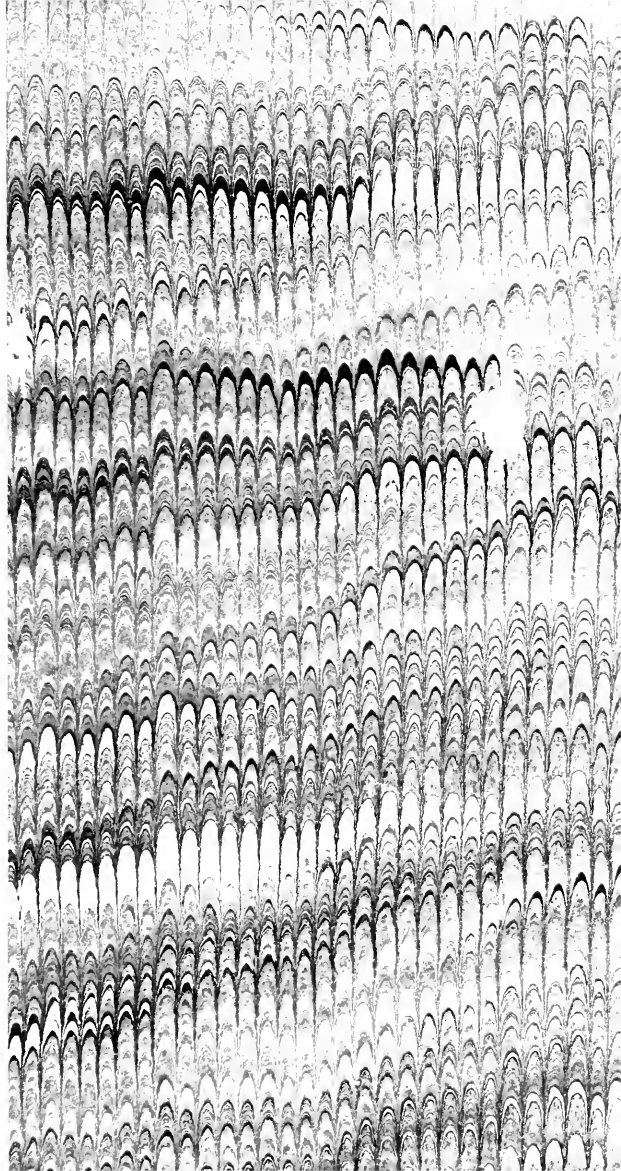


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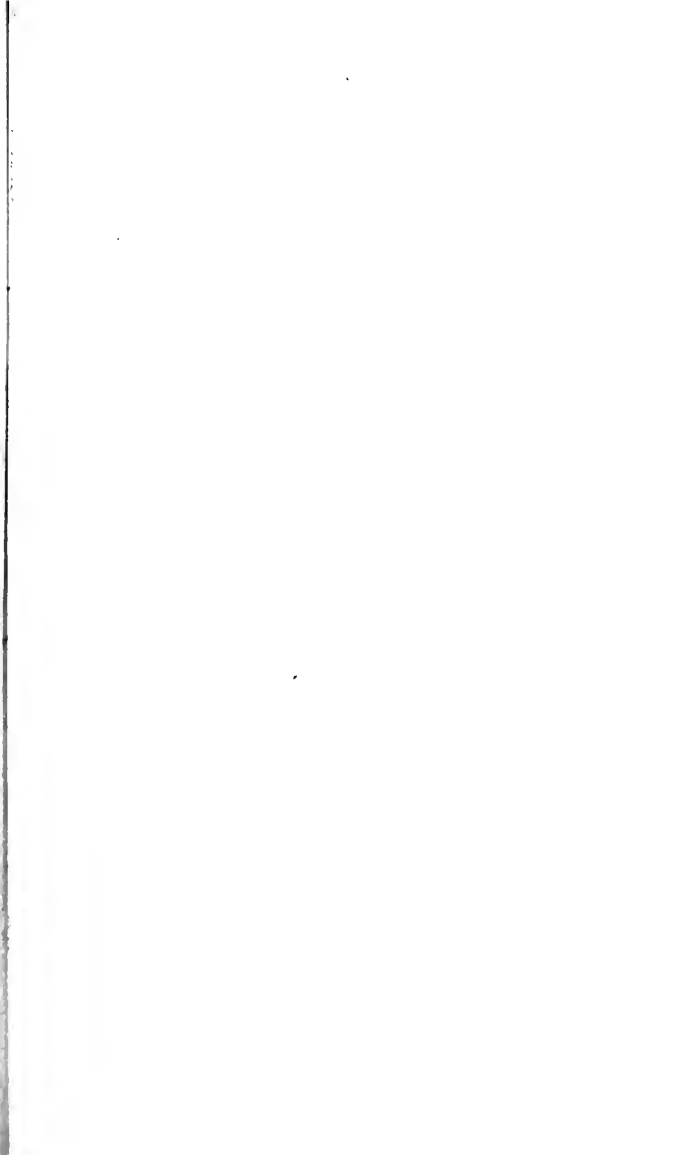
1867-1868

Sp. 11. *Crucifera membranacea*

Left for mother's school.

Sept 2. P.M.







# En Avant, Messieurs!

BEING A

## TUTOR'S COUNSEL TO HIS PUPILS.

BY THE

REV. G. H. D. MATHIAS, M.A.

LATE FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

Vorwärts, Kinder, Vorwärts!

MARSHAL BLÜCHER (*passim*).

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Dedicated

TO HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF RICHMOND,

IN

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

OF CONFIDENCE REPOSED BY HIM

IN THE AUTHOR.

1030753



## PREFACE.

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It is to the suggestion of a pupil that the publication of the following pages is due. They were originally scattered hints on English composition, subjects for English essays, and notes on conversations about some of the many points on which the intelligent observation of those who have been lately public-school boys will often ask for information.

Whatever truth there may be in the charge of ignorance brought against the Alumni of our two largest public schools, the author of the following pages can at least bear his testimony to their general

activity of mind and love of information. If habits of continuous application are imperfectly developed, yet, according to the author's experience, a passive contentment with ignorance is almost unknown. It is because he believes that there are many such beyond the narrow circle of his own pupil acquaintance that the author sends this volume to the press, hoping that it may contain answers (not easily found elsewhere) to some of the questions often asked, and explanations of subjects often discussed, by those who are beginning to take a wider interest in the studies and duties of life.

*September 1866.*



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## LETTERS AND ESSAYS.



### I.

#### WHERE HAD I BEST TRAVEL?

**Y**OU tell me you are to travel for a year or so before you enter your profession; and you ask me what countries I advise you to choose for your tour.

Now before we come to the countries, let me beg you not to undervalue this year's travel, and not to treat it as mere amusement and nothing more: if you do, you will have less amusement after all, and no profit from it. Happily there is such a thing as ennui; and time devoted to nothing but idle amusement is often as wearisome as it certainly is misspent.

If you were starting for a few months' shooting tour, you would carefully look to your equipments; suitable clothes for the

climate, guns and ammunition in plenty, means of repairing any damage done to your gear, when far beyond the circle of civilisation : prepare yourself in the above way for your year's journey ; you have a month or two before you start, and much may be done even in so short a time as that.

And as the knowledge of their language is the first and only approach to all knowledge of the people, pray rub-up all you know of the spoken languages of whatever countries you think of visiting. The two most important languages for continental travel are certainly French and Italian : the former will carry you through all the civilised parts of Germany, while German will take you nowhere beyond its own frontier, and Italian will not only carry you through its own glorious country—

“ *Magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,  
Magna virum*”—

where French is unknown, but through many of the cities of the Mediterranean coast beyond the boundaries of old Saturn's realm. The more languages you know, the more you multiply the avenues of knowledge and amusement alike in your travels : when you

are in the midst of foreigners, you will find how plentiful a harvest may be reaped from the labour employed upon their language at home.

You have, I conclude, some special tastes; very few have arrived at your age without acquiring some—either for art, or natural science, or history, or some study or other. Whatever your taste is, cultivate it with a view to reproducing it and enlarging it upon your travels. Some knowledge of history of course you have; fix it geographically before you start. My own especial taste is for architecture; I have *fixed* my information on that subject geographically by underlining in red all the places of architectural interest on a travelling map of whatever country I am about to visit: by this simple expedient I have often been supplied with the means of prosecuting a favourite study, when delayed or diverted from my route by accident, and have always been able at a single glance to arrange a tour so as to comprehend as many objects of architectural interest as possible.

You have little idea, until you try it for yourself, how vividly and really historical events come home to you when you stand

upon the spot which saw them take place. In the midst of the bustle of Paris the Place du Carrousel is again crowded by a howling furious mob, the Swiss guards again die valiantly at their posts, again the death-tumbrel rolls incessantly along the monotonous Rue de Rivoli, the guillotine as incessantly falls with its deep thud, and above all its victims the deathlike pallor of the royal sufferer remains deepest impressed upon the memory. Or at Fontainebleau (for instance) whole periods sweep before you at a glance, from the gay and profligate court of the first Francis to the tragie parting in the Cour des Adieux, and add to the richness of the Renaissance art the interest which the joys and the sorrows of our race cannot fail to arouse in any one who has felt the truth of the old verse,

“Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.”

I have been told that a young undergraduate peer, not many years ago, visited the capitals of the great Italian republics of the Middle Ages, history in hand, and on his return showed himself the equal, if not the superior, of his examiners, in his knowledge of his subject. I would venture to assert a belief that the knowledge he dis-

played was no way superior to the pleasure he had enjoyed in the acquisition of it.

There are two classes of English travellers whose example I recommend you not by any means to follow. Do not think, with one class, that when you have visited the principal theatres and "places," you have seen every thing, and so rush on to see if possible as little of another town; do not, with the other, Murray in hand, painfully plod through "sights" which have for you no interest whatever. The conduct of the first is simply frivolous and silly; that of the last is another form of the many-headed monster, humbug.

Think of the many different professions, trades, employments, which occupy the people of a country, and if the history of past times does not interest you, you may yet learn a good deal—be sure we in England are still very far from perfect—from foreigners' management in such things as the administration of their army, navy, in the organisation of government in its many branches, in agriculture, in education, in medicine, in popular amusements, in the conduct of charitable endowments. You will make some curious discoveries, if you keep your eyes open, in many points: how, for instance, with but little aid

from the taxes, the French organise an enormous system of poor-relief; how, with a naturally poor sandy soil, the Belgian and the Hollander will raise many times more produce than we can in our land, where their system of perpetual manuring is not adopted; how Belgian and French manufacturers are beginning to undersell ours as makers of machinery which Englishmen invented; how a French freeholder is often poorer than an English labourer any where north of the Trent. If you would appreciate the fairness of an English trial, attend, if you can, a government prosecution in France; if you would see in their faces where the intellect of France has taken refuge, take a turn or two up and down the arcades of the Palais de Justice at Paris, and you will find yourself in a moment amongst a race totally different to the habitués of the Bourse and the cafés. If you would understand how far more useful educated women may be in their services to the poor, when reasonably organised, rather than when left each to her own devices, visit some of the many crèches, *i. e.* child-homes, or some of the hospitals under the tender care of the Sœurs de la Charité: and above all, if you would understand the people



among whom you are staying, skim through their chief newspapers—all the best and some of the worst; notice their peculiarities, both in what they omit and what they insert; how the “padding” of the *feuilleton* takes the place of politics amongst us; observe the “conspicuous absence” of all notices of public meetings, the careful repression of any safety-valve for public feeling, and yet the bitter hostility between different sections of the public, as evinced by the violent language of their antagonistic newspapers,—the *Siècle*, for instance, versus the *Monde*; and you will soon understand why there are a hundred thousand men in barracks encamped within twenty miles of the Tuileries, and how it is that the streets swarm with bon-bon shops, while you may often traverse several in a vain search after a bookseller’s.

You will do well, then, to visit a good deal besides all the theatres and perhaps a museum or two; but yet, I would say, don’t visit any thing because it is the correct thing to do so. You will often meet—and it is a humiliating sight—the great British traveller earnestly engaged in the conscientious performance of this sham. I shall not soon forget one I met in the old cathedral of Lau-

sanne. I was sketching at the time, I recollect, when I heard behind me the well-known tones of the great British traveller, this time not in broken French, but yet not by any means the purest English; he was employed in describing the cathedral to his better half in good solid sonorous utterances: it was exactly as if an English verger had been dropped, with all his exact and dreary round of information complete, into the Swiss cathedral. In vain did the British traveller's poor wife struggle to escape from the infliction of a lesson expressed in language at least half of which must have been unintelligible to both of them: had he not a serious duty to do, and does not England expect &c.? On flowed the current of unmeaning words: "The triforium and clerestory of this ancient building are unique; observe the banded columns of the tower-piers; the abaci are &c. &c." And so on with persistent resolution from tower to altar, and from altar to porch again; when they finally retired, with the conviction of duty nobly done on the part of one, and (I hoped) a secret resolve to rebel on that of the other. Poor thing! her sufferings must have been acute, as they certainly were prolonged. I wondered if

they had done the whole map of Switzerland upon the same scale.

Now just as the amount of your shooting is limited by the precautions you have taken with respect to your guns and ammunition, so you will find the pleasure of travelling exactly proportional to the knowledge you take with you, and the knowledge you are prepared to gain by keeping your eyes open and your wits about you while you are abroad. And now, I think, you will almost have anticipated my reply to your question: Where do you advise me to travel?

My answer is, "Exactly where your tastes lead you;" only try and acquire in this as in every thing tastes as wide and large as possible. If you take most delight in scenery, you will, of course, rush to the Alps; but while there, seize the opportunity of visiting the Swiss people in their homes, in their governments, their manufactures, their public festivals, their religious rites. Some of the Swiss governments are very original and instructive; their public games, especially in Appenzell and the eastern cantons generally, date from days when we too had public sports in every village in England; while theirs have lasted through the extinction of ours, and now

see their revival in the form of the volunteer movement, the rifle-practising, and the gymnasia now being established in our large towns. See for yourself whether the assertion is true—I have heard it both asseverated and contradicted—"that there is a marked difference in the appearance of the homes, in the cleanliness and comfort of the people, between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant cantons;" and every where try and judge for yourself: use the accounts of previous travellers much as an able navigator uses an old chart,—as a field for observation rather than as a standard of faith.

I remember—in connection with this subject—to have read not long ago a very instructive letter of the great German poet and philosopher, Goethe, dated from Naples, May 28th, 1787: he tells his correspondent that "the useful and learned Volekmann" (the Murray of his day) "asserts, and no one had ever dreamed of contradicting him, that there were from 30,000 to 40,000 idlers, vagabonds, tramps in short, in Italy." Of course Naples was their head-quarters; so at Naples he sets to work to investigate the statement, which he does by going amongst the people at all hours and in all places: on the quays

he finds a good many loungers : but on inquiry they turn out to be wind-bound fishermen (what hundreds may be encountered at times round our industrious ports !), who flitted out of sight at once on the arrival of a fair wind. At the principal places in the town he found many “ idlers,” but they were porters and cab-drivers waiting for work, and only too glad to get some ; in the gardens round the city he found labourers unremitting in their toil, driving their donkeys laden with garden-produce many times a day into the city, returning laden with manure, vegetable-stalks, or any rubbish that could enlarge the garden dung-heap ; and he adds, “ the rich little think, as they leave the Opera at midnight, that before break of day some industrious fellow will have carefully followed up the tracks of their horses with the same object.” On the sea-shore he watched little children, some not more than three or four years old, collecting every scrap of drift-wood, and packing it in bundles for the market. In the market-place he amused himself with noticing the watchful solicitude of a water-melon merchant, aged about twelve, over his wares, which he sold in slices to some equally watchful customers, who, though

perhaps his juniors, looked equally anxious to secure a fair farthing's worth for their farthing. And you will find in this, as in many other instances, that much wider questions are opened up by using your own powers of observation, and not receiving as gospel the somewhat reckless assertions of preceding travellers. In this case you may be led to inquire whether idleness can exist largely in a state at all emerged from barbarism; whether, in fact, its existence is not a proof of barbarism resulting in great measure from bad government. And yet do not suppose that I undervalue good books of travels; what I say is, "Don't be implicitly guided by them:" much may have been changed between their date and yours. Read some, however, before you start, or rather skim through some, to gather what the writer thought best worth seeing; but far better read (not skim) a good book of the history of any country you are about to visit—that is worth a hundred travellers' tales; while a good book of criticism on the chief European galleries is the best cicerone you can hire for them.

Remember, too, that as you go abroad to see foreign countries and foreign people,

and to hear foreign languages spoken, so you will do well to avoid the promiscuous swarms of English who fly yearly up the Rhine, through Switzerland, and escape homewards by some outlet into France, during August and September: you can arrange to be not on the Rhine or near the Alps then; or, if this is impossible, make your way to smaller places (the English always travel in herds), as, for instance, in Switzerland, move on to Lauterbrunnen, instead of cockney Interlachen; to Brunnau, the entrance of the grandest of Swiss water-scenery, the Bay of Uri, instead of Lucerne; to Spiez, a thorough Swiss retreat, instead of Thun; or, better still, get away into St. Gall and the Grisons, and the sublime shores of the lake of Wallenstadt, away from our countrymen's well-beaten tracks, which are lined (as the bottom of the sea from here to India is said to be) by empty beer-bottles.

Few travellers have an idea how much of interest is to be found away from the beaten track, which is followed, not because it is the best, but because the majority of English travellers are limited in point of time, and foolish enough to measure their

enjoyment by the distance they have traversed, rather than by the objects of interest they have visited. It is only within quite modern days that Paris has come (to most English travellers) to represent France. Even down to the Revolution, there were nominally many provincial parliaments, and every where the provinces still give proofs of their former independence, having, what is totally wanting in England, each a long individual history, at times entirely separate from that of France. A traveller has really seen but little of France who has not visited Rouen and Caen, Tours and Blois, Rennes and Le Mans, Bordeaux and Rheims and Nancy, and many other ancient cities, over and above Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles, which too often represent France to the modern English traveller, as he hurries on to see Italy, equally ill-represented by Genoa, Rome, and Naples.

And pray do not forget that a gentleman can't be too careful not to offend (even unintentionally) the susceptibilities of foreigners. I am afraid that we English have acquired—and what is more, deserved—a bad character in this respect. Pray do your best to recover a better opinion of the manners of our coun-



trymen among foreign nations. We expect them in England to behave quietly in our churches; to remain in them and our law-courts bareheaded, and generally to submit to the customs and observances of our country: and they expect the same of us. We are guests on any soil but our own; and it is ill-manners to set yourself up as a judge of your host's etiquette and regulations. Much of our ill-manners in former days may, I hope, be set down to the score of ignorance; but it is pretty widely known now that they don't like to see people walk arm-in-arm in a church, or turning their backs upon the high altar; and they are somewhat indignant, in the smaller towns especially, if you do not uncover as a religious procession passes. As we know these things, it is a pity that our evil repute has not been long ago erased from the minds of our continental neighbours. "Every mickle makes a muckle." In a year's tour you may do not a little to aid in removing this opprobrium. It is in reference especially to our disregard of the feelings and ideas of others that the common French expression has become stereotyped,—"*C'est un Anglais; que voulez-vous?*"

## II.

### ON THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE.

YOU ask me whether there is any principle on which a language is to be studied. And I must own to not a little astonishment at having had the question put to me not by you merely, but by men many years your seniors; because I can't for the life of me conceive how Latin (for instance) is to be taught at all, except on principle.

I will explain my meaning more clearly by illustration. Not long since an excellent mathematical scholar told me that he had been obliged (much against his wishes) to give up Latin and Greek ever since he was fifteen years of age, as he could make nothing of them at all; he much regretted his inability to learn a language grammatically, because (independently of the sources of information from which he was thus debarred) when in India it was of importance to him to know more than one of the native languages thoroughly, but he never could get beyond the little that his ear taught him—a certain con-

versational fluency, but not one word could he ever learn to write correctly.

On inquiry as to wherein his difficulty consisted, he told me that it arose from no defect of memory; he could easily recollect the meanings of the words in a Latin sentence, but he never could get them into continuous sense without more toil than the results were worth—"le jeu ne vaudrait pas la chandelle"—for, after all, the result was but guess-work.

He used, he assured me (and his plan must seem to any scholar highly ingenious), to work out a sentence on the mathematical rule for permutations and combinations: so many changes of the words were possible—all possible ones must be tried, and the most likely one adopted. Now, I quite believe this to be only an exaggerated form of the difficulties met with by so many in the study of Latin and Greek, for want of having the first principles of those languages placed before them. On going closer into the matter with my mathematical friend, he explained his position more clearly by taking a Virgil and opening it at haphazard: we lighted on

"Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt  
Moliri, et late fines custode tueri."

Which he considered to mean “he was compelled by the novelty of the state of affairs to commit many cruel actions, and sentinels protected his wide domains;” which, you will see, conveys an idea of the meaning of the passage, but as a grammatical translation was wrong in every particular. I saw at a glance that he had not an idea of the first principles on which the Latin language is based.

Now, all the languages with which you are at all likely to have to do—that is to say, the two great languages of the ancient, and two or three of the modern world—are based each on one of two principles, or on a mixture of the two. There is really a very broad gulf fixed between the ancient and modern languages: it is simply this, they inflected their substantives, adjectives, and verbs; and we, as a rule, do not. Of all the great modern languages the German inflects most, and the English least.

I will make this distinction, this great gulf of separation, clearer by continuing our conversation relative to these same two lines chosen by the *sortes Virgilianæ*. Where, I asked, in your translation do you get all your small words from—‘he,’ ‘was,’ ‘by,’

‘to,’ ‘of,’ the plural formations ‘sentinels,’ ‘domains’?—O, all these must be supplied, as they have none of them in Latin.—But, excuse me, they have every one of them as rigidly and exactly as we have.—Where? I can’t see any.—Will you be good enough to tell me the meaning of each word, one by one?—Certainly: ‘res’ means a ‘thing, event;’ ‘dura’ means ‘hard;’ ‘regni’ means a ‘kingdom;’ ‘novitas,’ ‘novelty;’ ‘talía,’ ‘such;’ ‘cogunt,’ ‘compel.’—Pardon me, you have not given the meaning of any single word right: you have translated only a part of each word. The Latin word for ‘event’ is not ‘res,’ but ‘re:’ for ‘hard’ is not ‘dura,’ but ‘dur;’ for ‘kingdom’ is ‘regn;’ for ‘compel’ is ‘cog.’ You smile at this, but I am not joking; they are simple facts that I am stating. And now, if you want to express the word ‘event’ in the nominative case singular, you say ‘res,’ you affix an ‘s;’ if you want to annex to ‘dur,’ ‘hard,’ the idea of a nominative singular feminine, you affix an ‘a;’ if you want to say ‘of a kingdom,’ instead of placing ‘of’ in front, as all the foreign languages except German do, you affix an ‘i’ to ‘regn;’ in fact, ‘i’ means ‘of;’ it is no capricious termination; in this declension it can mean no-

thing else in the singular. Here the nominative of the Latin word 'novelty' is needed; in more grammatical language you want to employ 'novelty' as the subject of the sentence, so 'as' is added to 'novit;' so 'talía' is not 'such,' but 'such things,'—not 'such men or women,' nor 'by' nor 'with' nor 'from' nor 'of' nor 'to such things,' but simply 'such things,' nominative or accusative; so 'cogunt' is not 'compel,' that is not enough, but 'they are compelling,' or 'they compel;' 'cog' equals 'compel,' 'unt' equals 'they.' This is the principle, the very opposite of our modern languages' principle, and it is carried out to a much greater extent in Greek than in Latin. Once master this idea; look carefully for all the small words in the right place, namely at the end of the root-words, and I will venture to assert that, with your mathematical memory, you will not be long before you read Latin nearly as easily as you read the *Times*.—But would you teach languages that way?—Undoubtedly, as soon as the rudiments of the grammar are mastered: you must know the Latin 'of,' and 'by,' and 'from' first, directly you see them. How would you learn English if you were told that the little words did not signify;

or French, if the 'de' and 'a' and 'du,' &c. meant any thing or nothing? You will find instead that sometimes in the classical languages more is expressed than our more clumsy form of speech can cope with; as with that curious tense, the Greek aorist, which is, as its name tells us, of no time at all. And though the plan I have suggested may not be as amusing as guess-work at first, yet its unerring accuracy will soon more than compensate for the absence of the excitement of permutations and combinations. Listen now; I will decline you a word; the root is 'domin,' found in Latin in 'dominari,' to rule; 'dominatio,' a ruling; 'dominus,' a master; found in English in dominion, domineer, dominant. But with us, unfortunately, when we have taken the root, and formed a substantive, or verb, or adjective from it, we can do no more: then they are fixed for ever in one form, with only the slight inflection of the plural in the substantive, and in the verb the disused second person, domineerest, the participles active and passive. Now, if a Roman wanted to express the idea that 'lord' was the subject of the sentence, he made that unmistakable by adding 'us' to the root; if he

wanted to express 'the property of the lord,' he said 'the property the lord-of,' or 'res domini;' putting the 'of' after the word it qualifies, instead of before it, and inserting the 'of' in the place of 'us,' which was not wanted any longer, as the word 'lord' had ceased to be the subject. And he dealt exactly in the same way with the adjective; so exactly, that the declension of substantives once well learned, the adjectives follow naturally. So with the verb: we say 'I rule;' the Roman instead said with much more terseness 'rule-I,' 'dominor;' instead of 'we rule,' 'rule-we,' 'dominamur.' But the powers of inflection ranged far beyond this: we have now to call in the aid of various clumsy auxiliaries; the Romans did this but seldom; the Greeks hardly ever. To express the simple notion of the imperfect we must introduce 'was,' and turn the verb into the participle: 'I was ruling,' in Latin 'rul-ing-was-I,' 'dominabar;' and far beyond this again, 'a-man-likely-to-rule' is in Latin one word, 'dominaturus.'

I was surprised, I must own, to think that a manifestly industrious man should never have had this simple and self-evident principle made clear to him. For I am sure



that half a year's hard study of Latin on this principle would have opened to him the stores of ancient literature, which he so much desired to read in their original language.

You will understand; of course, that I have spoken of the simple sentence, or of separate clauses in a compound sentence: but very little more knowledge is required to enable you to analyse a compound sentence; hardly more than is contained in the simple rule that you must not on any consideration put the cart before the horse—that is to say, the relative before its antecedent, or the dependent and helpless subjunctive before the independent and autocratic indicative.

### III.

#### ON ENTERING THE ARMY.

**I**T has been the frequent remark of foreigners, after viewing—not without a little secret envy, perhaps—our superlatively perfect collections of zoology and botany at the Regent's Park and at Kew, that it would be very much to our discredit not to possess such collections, considering our opportunities—considering that England stretches out her arms over every sea, and has carved out for herself some of the finest slices of every continent. The argument, which is unanswerable, may be applied with equal truth to certain points in connection with the gallant profession you have just joined. In two respects you have, as a young man, unrivalled opportunities over any equal of yours joining any other profession whatever. The first is time; the second, travel. Take the case of the ordinary professional man, whether barrister, town-clergyman, so-

licitor, merchant, banker, medical man,—you will find their average of work from seven to nine hours a day; yours (after the first few months' drill) is not, I think, understated at about three hours. Now, I want you clearly to realise this fact to yourself, that you may at least enter upon your profession with a knowledge of the advantages you have in it.

Secondly, as regards travel: it would be simply foolish to compare or rather contrast your opportunities with those of any other professional man; with them a six weeks' tour in Europe is generally the extent of their loosest tether. There are but two other professions to compare with yours in this respect, the English navy and foreign military service.

An English naval officer has certainly the richest opportunities of any man of "seeing the world;" but there is this counter-balancing disadvantage—his view must necessarily be a partial and in some respects a superficial one; he cannot be long absent from his ship, and must consequently confine his sight-seeing to the outside shell of the countries he visits. How many naval officers one meets who have been their four

years on the Mediterranean station, but have had no opportunities of visiting Venice, Florence, or even Rome; not to name Damascus, Cairo, or Jerusalem.

Of the five great European armies, two, the Prussian and the Italian, are confined within the limits of their own countries—within hearing of their own language; and therefore the only advantage of travel that their officers can gain through their profession is a knowledge of their respective countries. The Austrian officer is liable to serve from Venetia in the west to Transylvania in the east: but if he is an *Austrian*, he is regarded as an alien oppressor in both countries; if he is of either province, as the oppressor of the other; in any case 20° of longitude bound the extent of his military horizon. The great mass of French officers never leave la belle France; in Algeria a comparatively small fraction has had an excellent school for irregular warfare; beyond Algeria, the French possessions are trifling, and their military occupation not worth mentioning. The Russian officer alone is at all on a par with the English in his opportunities for seeing the world; but with all the vastness of Russia, there is

hardly that variety of scenery, climate, and natural products which the English territories afford; and from the great tediousness and expense of moving large bodies of troops through whole continents devoid of railways, a Russian officer probably does not in a long lifetime traverse one half of the surface of the globe, that many an English subaltern has seen before he gets his company. A nation which occupies military stations from Montreal to Hong-Kong, and from Inverness to Auckland—whose troops have within the last few years taken Delhi, Lucknow, and Peking—ought to possess a body of officers whose large acquaintance with geography, natural history, and foreign countries generally, should have a perceptible influence upon the knowledge and the thought of modern English society.

You will have, after allowing a large margin for amusements, some hours at least a day which you can, if you will, devote to something of more worth than the inevitable billiards or the irrepressible whist: not that I undervalue the skill required for either, especially the latter, game; but they should be amusements (*a mousis*), a turning aside from more serious studies. What

those more serious studies should be is decided primarily by your choice of a profession; you are bound in honour to master that profession both in its principles and details. It may be ever so true that the chances are against your ever needing that knowledge in the field; but remember that the same shallow argument would abolish your profession altogether. This is, I know, one of the two poor arguments usually brought forward by a young officer against making a study of his profession; the other is as baseless, that a general, like a poet, "*nascitur, non fit.*" Let us examine each in turn.

The very existence of an army is based on a contingency, at least with us: with some foreign armies, unhappily, the first object of an army is to overawe their own people; with us the one sole object is to meet the contingency of foreign war. You are therefore bound in honour to the Queen and country you serve to be in as highly effective a condition as possible to meet the one contingency for which you exist, whenever it may arise. When that great man and true soldier, Sir Charles J. Napier, was making his original comments for his own instruction

upon all things military, from Alexander and Hannibal to Marshal Saxe and Napoleon, what *chance* do you suppose he thought he had of ever bringing that knowledge to the test of actual warfare? He tells us in his diary more than once that he thought then he had none. And yet his masterly campaigns in Scinde—campaigns equally memorable for the genius with which they were planned and the vigour with which they were carried out—were the undoubted results of his military thought and studies of more than thirty years previously. His original and most efficient schemes for camel and baggage corps, his exact appreciation of all the duties and difficulties of the privates, were the fruit of studies in the “piping days of peace,”—peace which all men reasonably expected to last for at least the next half-century. In fact, the occurrence of war is always a matter of the greatest uncertainty; we live in a mist until the thunder-cloud bursts upon us. The first great Exhibition was to have inaugurated “a term of universal peace;” and the reply to this amiable prophecy was first the Indian mutiny, then the Crimean, and thirdly the Italian, war, and last and greatest, the American civil

war. Depend upon it, then, that on the soberest principles of reason, as well as on the higher grounds of honour, a soldier is bound so to live in peace that war may never find him unprepared.

The other argument, derived from a distortion of the truth about heaven-sent genius, is, I am afraid, often a merely specious cloak for idleness. For, first, we are not speaking of *genius* at all, but of a perfect and most efficient *knowledge* of your profession. Apply the argument to other professions,—does the barrister, or the civil engineer, or the physician refuse to study because he feels his industry chilled in the shade of such great names as Mansfield, Stephenson, or Jenner? When you know more intimately the lives of great men, you will see that their greatness was mainly the result of their incessant study of their professions, acting upon a capacious memory and a well-disciplined reason. It is not a little singular to see how actions which appear to the uninformed to be great strokes of genius are really (often confessedly) nothing but a rapid exercise of memory.

You know how serious was the disparity of numbers and guns between us and the



French at the battle of the Nile; you know, too, how greatly Nelson's stroke of genius was admired by which he placed his ships inside the French, between them and the shoal-water, arguing that "where a large French ship could swing, a smaller English one could float;" how he thus attacked his enemies on their unprepared quarter, since they had not their guns in working order that were pointed towards the shoal. It was undeniably a master-stroke; but that it was not the inspiration of the moment we have the best authority for believing, namely, Nelson's own: he told his captains that "he *remembered* to have heard Lord Hood suggest such an attack under similar circumstances."

Not many years ago, one of the most acute of our lawyers, then chief-justice, was trying a gang of sharpers who had plucked some silly young fellow of all his feathers in a railroad carriage at various games of cards. A pack of cards found in the possession of these worthies was produced during the trial, accompanied by a certificate from the London detectives, stating that they had examined the pack, and found it an honest one. The chief-justice took the pack, looked at

it carefully for a minute or two, while the trial was going on, and laid it down. When he came to charge the jury, they were not a little astonished by his taking up the cards and assuring them that they *were* a sharper's pack, though both the detectives and the prosecutor's counsel had failed to discover the fact. The prisoners visibly shuddered at the bar; their last hope was gone, as the judge assured the jury he would instantly name any card they liked to draw: he then called their attention to their flowery backs, and pointed out a quiet demure-looking little flower in one corner with dots for petals, which dots he showed them varied in number and position according to the value of the card. On being asked afterwards how he had detected so clever a fraud, the judge simply replied that "he *remembered* it; he had seen something of the kind many years before." You will by these instances learn to appreciate the great force and worth of memory; and pray *remember* this, that memory is of all mental powers the one most capable of improvement by cultivation; like good steel, it will bear any amount of work and grinding.

You will now admit that I have given

you some good reasons for making a study of your profession. I will in my next letter suggest what subjects you can and ought to study.

#### IV.

#### ON ENTERING THE ARMY.

THE study and mastery of one's profession is, you assure me, a very different matter in the army to what it is in any other line of life : that elsewhere industry almost certainly brings success, whereas in the army success is very doubtful indeed, depending upon many other conditions besides merit. I do not deny the general truth of your argument ; but let me remind you that success is not the only object in life ; let me again urge you to study on the plea of duty, because it will make you a more efficient soldier than an ill-read and unscientific man can be ; and last (but not least) because it will supply healthy occupation for the mind, which otherwise is almost certain to betake itself to unhealthy occupation.

Perhaps the greatest drawback in the army, as a profession, for a young officer, is the small amount of time demanded for his regular duties, and the slight amount of study

requisite to secure his promotion. By study I don't mean mere book-work, far from it : what I mean I will explain by an example, and will say that a young barrister who had no more knowledge of how to conduct a defence than many a young officer I have heard of has of light-infantry manœuvres, would soon find his promotion more than problematical. The only corrective to this ignorance is a keen conviction in the mind of an officer that it is a matter of duty to understand his business as well as he would do if his daily bread depended on it.

As regards the subjects of study over and above the practical details of his regimental duties, an officer has this immense advantage over the members of any other profession, that there is hardly one subject in science or literature that does not bear directly on the art of war. I do not deny that able men in all professions do to their great mental profit keep pace (to a certain extent) with the discoveries and great intellectual efforts of the time ; but such study is undertaken rather for relaxation from the severity of their professional duties, and can influence and extend their professional knowledge very indirectly : but in your case all your study will bear directly

upon the one great point, how to become an abler officer. In literature, take for instance military history and biography; there has not been in modern times a single great commander who has not largely profited by the experience of those who have gone before him; by a knowledge of their knowledge, their abilities, their successes, ay and their errors too; for, after all, war is but a repetition of the same game, with slightly different pieces: mountain ranges will have to be passed, rivers to be crossed, combinations to be effected, commissariat to be supplied, the enemy to be outwitted or overwhelmed, to the end of time. And now consider what advantages a general possesses who carries about with him, ready for instant use, a perfect knowledge of how all these and more have been effected by able men before him. You can hardly conceive any position in which an officer in command of troops can be placed which has not been already described in the biographies of eminent soldiers: war carried on against civilised or barbarous nations in every kind of country and climate, with or without allies, allies more or less untrustworthy; a position with an army well or ill supported by the government at

home, in a country hostile or friendly, with troops your own countrymen or foreigners, with troops more or less mutinous, on the march or in transports, with sickness or shipwreck to contend against, with sickness on the march, from cholera in India to frozen limbs in Canada, with bad barrack accommodation and consequent sickness and ill-feeling amongst the men; all these and many more contingencies of the same nature you will find fully recorded in the annals of military histories; and, depend upon it, the knowledge of how others have met similar difficulties will be most serviceable to any officer, whether general or subaltern, when he is himself similarly situated.

Much, too, may be learnt from the history of disasters clearly and honestly told. If you would learn how not to carry on a campaign, read the expedition to the Isle of Rhé in Charles I.'s time, or General Burgoyne's disastrous campaign in the American war, or (worse than all) the Walcheren expedition. Your greatest difficulty will be in choice of subject, you are met by an *embarras de richesses*; as regards military history the old adage of "non multa sed multum" is as true as it is in the mastery of all rudi-

mentary knowledge : begin first with a campaign in Napier's *Peninsular War*, and master it by frequent reading, with a good map at your side, so that you could tell the whole of it to a friend as accurately as if you had been engaged in it yourself : you will find also the study of Napier's criticisms at the end of each grand movement an excellent model to form your own upon.

I suppose there is no man who reads at all who does not delight in history and biography ; other branches of study are far less generally popular ; some men cannot without the greatest—and therefore the most useless—toil master a language ancient or modern ; others again find themselves repulsed at their first attempt to scale the heights of science ; but all minds alike, whether by nature literary or scientific, meet on the common ground of history, which of all branches of knowledge is happily the one most profitable for a soldier : it is a study about which a soldier can make no mistake ; he may carry his science, or rather be run away with it, for all practical purposes, too far ; but you can never know too much of the principles upon which men in other days and countries have achieved success, re-



deemed losses, or sustained defeat. It is a study, too, which can be carried out anywhere ; books are now happily almost universal, and history needs no professor or moonshee at your side to smooth over difficulties and correct mistakes ; all your requisites for any amount of study are the book itself, a good map, and a note-book to make your own comments in.

But supposing that your natural bent of mind is towards science, you will find that there is not one branch of science from the root—namely, pure mathematics—upwards, which will not return a rich harvest to the soldier-student. Surveying, road-making, fortification, architecture, are all founded upon the basis of mathematics. I know a young officer, who after with great difficulty weathering the gale of the army examination, has been of the greatest service to his regiment in India by his practical knowledge of draining, building, &c., and thus restoring health and quieting panic in barracks situated—as I am told they often are in India—in the most unhealthy localities. Which fact reminds me that that branch of science which the French call *hygiène* is a most important study for an officer who has to com-

mand men in countries where, as in Canada, the thermometer sinks to  $30^{\circ}$  below zero, and India, where it rises to  $150^{\circ}$ ; and has to do his best to preserve his own and his men's health under either extreme of temperature. A knowledge of the main facts of physiology—which I daresay you know is only a long word for a man's domestic economy—useful for all, is doubly important for one who is intrusted with the health of a number of men as stupid and perverse about the preservation of their health as English soldiers seem to be in all and especially in hot climates. “Prevention is better than cure,” says the old proverb; but really in a hot climate there is no comparison between them at all: by wisdom and firmness you may prevent disease, where a cure is simply hopeless and unlooked for. Now you are almost certain to be sent before long to India: there was some excuse in former days for a young officer's arriving there a “Griffin,” raw and inexperienced, ignorant of how to meet the exigencies of the climate, unable to adapt himself to the circumstances of life so different to those at home. There is no excuse now; you may, by a little careful reading, net about “India” generally (as

people loosely talk), but about that country in it where you will be quartered,—you may know exactly the whole life there before you have set foot on its soil: and a very slight knowledge of your own domestic economy will convince you that if you are not temperate, especially in the matter of spirits, you will quickly manufacture *in propria personâ* that great delicacy which has long immortalised the ancient city of Strasburg.

In the East, which is now the best, almost the only field for distinction open to a young officer, the passports to distinction are languages and applied mathematics. Of the value of the latter I have just spoken: many who can't master mathematics often possess a singular facility for acquiring languages, and for these you have in India "ample field and verge enough." Nor can the labour be very great, when you hear a language spoken constantly about you. An Englishman of average intelligence will by residing in a German family in Germany soon acquire a very considerable knowledge of their language; and the same principle of teaching must hold good with all languages: when your servants, cab-drivers, shopmen, all places of public amusement, the very beggars, are

your teachers, a man must be very dense or very careless, who does not, even with but little labour, soon gain a general acquaintance with the spoken language, and with labour acquire a perfect command of it. Nor is Charles V.'s well-known saying about languages at all obsolete yet.

Considering how widely our army is scattered over the earth's surface, and what varieties of scenes it meets, it is very surprising that the study of drawing should be so neglected as it is in the education of boys intended for the army. For drawing is not merely a most useful servant to a soldier, but a very amusing companion. I have mentioned in another letter the advantages of a knowledge of it, and the principles on which it can so easily and so truly be studied. I will only add now that an officer in an ordinary marching regiment could, after a few years' foreign service, bring home a richer collection of drawings and paintings than any but the wealthiest traveller could amass : indeed it rarely happens that very wealthy men can spare the time which a tour in India, China, or Australia demands, and none but the wealthy can endure the expenses of so long a journey. You get your

journey-money free, and can get plenty of time at your disposal as well. I have heard also of the large London printsellers paying officers very highly for good views and spirited sketches in foreign parts ; but, independent of the money-question, you will find yourself amply repaid for your labour by a portfolio of the pleasantest souvenirs one can bring back from distant lands.

It is a mere truism to add that a correct eye and a clever hand for draughtmanship have many a time pointed out a young officer to his general for employment and promotion, and that few claims are better established. Let me, however, add this warning, based on complaints I have heard made by commanding officers, that a showy and superficial sketch is always worthless and often mischievous ; it is the report of a scout who forgets a good deal of his intelligence and exaggerates the rest. You can't be too accurate in your drawing. This complaint of the inaccuracy of young officers' drawings is due no doubt to the shallow system on which drawing is generally taught. Once master Ruskin's "stone out of the road," get its shape exactly, mark all its spots correctly, round all its little projections, and

sink all its concavities rigidly, and after practice of this nature you need not fear the imputation of making a picture equally pretty and valueless. So all-important indeed is accuracy in military matters, that photography will eventually supplant most hand-drawing on the field, wherever it is possible to get a small camera, which is almost every where; and if you can acquire half the skill in the use of the camera that many amateurs now possess, you will find there another great resource of personal amusement and professional utility.

I remember going a good many years ago to see a travelling circus in company with a young surgeon. We saw the usual exhibition of well-trained horses and men displaying an almost incredible activity and suppleness of body. "Ah! shouldn't I like to have the dissecting of one of those fellows!" was the rather sanguinary remark of my companion. Very professional, you will think, but very natural: to the rest of us the show had been one of skill and dexterity; while he had seen nerves strained and muscles elastic to their uttermost far below the mere surface, to which our unscientific view was limited.

This I believe is the spirit in which an officer determined to thoroughly master his profession views every place he sees. Many spots will awake a twofold interest, that of past military history as well as of future military contingencies. In Canada and India, our two most important military occupations, there is hardly a place of note that is not sacred ground to a true soldier. Whatever we hold in either we have fought and fought well for: our supremacy in both countries has more than once trembled in the balance; and in considering the history of that supremacy do not for a moment estimate a commander by the size of the army he commands. The Waleheren expedition consisted of 40,000 men, it was conducted with infatuated stupidity and ended in humiliating discomfiture; while Wolfe carried the heights of Abraham with 3600 men: with 1000 English and 2000 sepoy's Clive scattered 50,000 of the enemy at Plassy to the winds; while Moore—greater than either—turned at bay, and conquered with less than 16,000 men, exhausted with weeks of forced marches over bad roads, with scanty food and in miserable weather, dispirited with the consciousness of retreat, but inflexibly supported by the loyal belief

that their general's ability was equal to any emergency. The sequel of this glorious story proved how truly soldiers can gauge the merits of their commanders, and that no combination of untoward circumstances can crush British soldiers led by a general they can trust.

There is, as I said, a double interest to the soldier in travel, arising from the sight of places immortalised by his comrades' victories, and attractive from the interest they excite as places of military importance. Charles Napier could not, when travelling through the Continent, visit Geneva without estimating the value of the Swiss militia; or walk up the Simplon without observing the gentleness of the gradient; or survey Milan without commenting, like a soldier, on the Austrian military arrangements, and like a statesman on the injustice and unnaturalness of their position. In fact, the advantages that you possess in combining foreign travel with private study are simply incredible. No good historian will nowadays think of describing a battle or a siege, or any great military operation, without first visiting the ground. Macaulay notoriously did so. But there are many scenes that no civilian his-



rian could visit. How can an ordinary student visit Assaye, Seringapatam, or Bhurt-poor? You have every advantage in this respect; don't neglect them. Add to this the fact that the man who studies a battle carefully from the best sources of information may know its events more correctly than officers who were actually present, being limited (as a man must necessarily be) to one part of the field at a time, and, if a regimental officer, to one part of the field altogether. This rather improbable fact is curiously proved by an anecdote in the life of the great German historian Niebuhr: he was one day discussing with some friends the details of the great defeat of the Prussians at Jena; the battle, you will recollect, which laid Prussia at the feet of the French Emperor. Two officers were present who had been engaged in different parts of the field; both flatly contradicted the historian as regards some movement which he asserted had taken place at a certain time; a statement based, if I remember right, upon the formation of the ground on the field. Splendid as was Niebuhr's historical knowledge, his geographical was more marvellous still, and both were here called into court at once. An

arbiter must be appointed. Would the disputants submit to the decision of the military archives at the Berlin war-office? The officers—how could they otherwise?—consented most readily. Notes were made by third parties of the points in dispute, the Prussian records of the battle consulted, and their evidence was decisive in favour of the historian. The officers had viewed the scene with eyesight limited in scope and half-blinded with the smoke of musketry and artillery. The historian surveyed the field with all the aid that could be supplied by many eye-witnesses of the struggle at various points, by general orders, despatches, adjutant-generals' and quarter-master-generals' returns; in a word, he had amassed that knowledge for his own personal information, which you will I trust amass of many a great battle to enable you to become a first-rate officer.

I have spoken mostly hitherto of the knowledge to be gained from books. As my evidence on books may appear partial, hear what an old officer, Sir C. Napier, writes to a young officer—the warrior of forty-five years' hard service to an ensign: “Whether a regiment be in good or bad order, it ought not to affect a young man of

sense, because *by reading professional books* you will discover what is faulty in your corps, if faults there are; you will then learn how things ought to be, and will by daily observation see how they are. Thus you can form your comparisons, which will in time teach you your profession. I hope your regiment is in good order; but if not, take care that your company or section is, when you are intrusted with one. Keep up all knowledge that you have gained, and gain as much more as you can. *By reading*, you will be distinguished; without it, abilities are of little use. A man may talk and write, but he cannot learn his profession without constant study to prepare, especially for the higher ranks, because he then wants the knowledge and experience of others improved by his own. But *when in a post of responsibility he has no time to read*: and if he comes to such a post with an empty skull, it is too late to fill it, and he makes no figure. Thus many people fail to distinguish themselves, and say they are unfortunate, which is untrue: their own previous idleness unfitted them to profit from fortune. The smith who has to look for his hammer when the iron is red strikes too late: the hammer

should be uplifted to fall like a thunderbolt while the white heat is in the metal. Thus will the forging prosper." And this, remember, is the language of a man as original as he was well-read.

## V.

### TO A PUPIL ENTERING THE ARMY.

I HAVE written at greater length concerning the many lessons to be learned from books, because these are, from some unaccountable reason, so distasteful to many young men nowadays; and yet think how unreasonable is your dislike. You would sit and listen by the hour together to the Duke of Wellington or the Napiers, or any great soldier recounting the narrative of his campaigns; and what else are their despatches, or diaries, or biographies, but conversations or lectures, lacking indeed all the life of personal narration, but even superior in accuracy and carefulness and fulness of narrative?

There is, however, a large class of subjects where study and experiment must go hand in hand—such as chemistry, all the applied mathematics, and the physical sciences, and one other study of the deepest importance to a young officer; it is certainly

a dull one, but to every officer and soldier of the greatest moment, and can happily be studied, not only in books, but also by actual observation and experience. I have spoken of all studies, except history, as more or less *useful*: history is no doubt essential to an officer. You may or may not be a linguist, draughtsman, mechanician, chemist, or engineer. So much the better if you are any or all of these; but remember, a *judge* you must be. You will again and again be called on to decide on questions affecting the liberty, the honour, and perhaps the life of your fellow-soldiers. Now I am sure you are far too kind and high-principled not to wish to do your very best when on a court-martial; and I am equally sure that the thought that you had voted an unjust sentence would cause you bitter regret, and perhaps lasting remorse. But don't think that kind-heartedness and high principle can teach you how to weigh and estimate evidence: study and experience will alone do that. *Aprpos* of study *versus* good intentions, there is an amusing anecdote of Simeon, the leader of the Low-Church party at Cambridge for many years. How a young clergyman who belonged to his

school came to visit him after a year's experience of parish-work, lamenting his great deficiencies as an extempore preacher, recounting what trash he uttered, if he did not break down altogether; concluding his confession with the remark, "I suppose, sir, it is the want of faith that makes me so miserable a preacher?" "Not in the least, my dear young friend; justification comes by faith, but extempore preaching comes by works."

I remember to have read somewhere a detailed account of the court-martial held upon Admiral Byng, which condemned him to death; over whose remains his relations erected a monument—still extant—informing posterity that the government of that day had judicially murdered him. I well recollect the impression of intense remorse conveyed to my mind by the language used by more than one of the officers who had condemned him on the court-martial, and had sentenced him to death—not the least expecting that government would carry out the sentence; but who discovered, when too late, to their horror and distress, that they must abide by their decision. Byng was to be sacrificed to the clamour of the

mob, through the instrumentality of their verdict. No poet could load a victim with heavier burden of remorse than this reflection would be to any man of honour; the sense of having killed a brother officer and branded his name and family unrighteously.

Now the learning, or rather the ability, to be acquired to enable you to form a just judgment, is really not very great. It has nothing whatever to do with the quirks and technicalities of the law: it is simply to learn what evidence is; how far what you hear or read is trustworthy; how far improbable, when it is worthless; also the weight of it, how very much is needed for a conviction even for a minor offence. Now you will be almost certainly quartered, soon after joining your dépôt, at or near an assize town. Attend the Crown Court regularly; some one you know will get you, as an officer, a quiet and comfortable seat. Make notes mental, and, if you can, in pencil too, of the evidence; and pay particular attention to every word of the judge's charge to the jury, which comments on the evidence. He will point out where the evidence is contradictory—either that of



one witness with another, or one witness with himself; he will notice what evidence is weak and irrelevant, and what is convincing and conclusive; he will draw the attention of the jury to the real points at issue—often carefully obscured by the prisoner's counsel (that is their duty), and to the evidence on which these main points turn. Thus you will get a series of lessons in weighing evidence from a man whose experience in these matters began probably before you were born, and has continued uninterruptedly improving ever since. Can any reasonable man doubt that if officers thus learned how to value evidence—to view it apart from all extraneous circumstances of what other people think, apart from any influence of fear or favour; with the judicial calmness which characterises our bench—can any man doubt that courts-martial would stand much higher in public estimation than they do at present?

Now, pray don't misunderstand my exact meaning. I know that courts-martial are differently constituted, have a different and, in some respects, simpler form of procedure to our civil courts. But the objects of both are identical—to get at the truth, to

punish the guilty, and acquit the innocent; and the means by which you obtain the knowledge to form a decision upon are identical—evidence written and oral; and the principles on which that evidence is sifted must be, and notoriously are, the same. If, then, a young man has made up his mind to enter the army, the sooner he attends some of the assize courts and listens to the evidence there given, the better. It cannot be right or fair to the prisoner that his judge should take his first lessons in jurisprudence in his case, however trifling a one. The cases may be simple that first come before a young officer, but the light of nature never taught any man yet how to meet the manœuvres of a practised liar, or discriminate between the nervousness of unpractised perjury and that of an anxious temperament and natural timidity. Practice alone will give this power; and if you are attentive to even a few criminal trials, you will be surprised to find how differently you begin to regard evidence; how weak some appears on reflection, which at first seemed so convincing; how slight often a whole mass of evidence appears, when you consider, as did an old lawyer more than two centuries ago,

“that two-hundred white rabbits don’t make one white horse;” that any amount of accumulative evidence proving a man a mischievous demagogue generally, will not convict him of treason. Of all your studies let this be the first: to gain that knowledge, without which you cannot possibly do that which you solemnly undertake, to judge justly and fairly. Happily, an occasional attendance at a trial is regarded as an amusement rather than as a hardship by most educated Englishmen.

You will see that I have exhausted a good large list of subjects of study all directly connected with your profession. There are other pursuits which you will have ample opportunities of following up, which will not only supply both pleasure and interest at the time, but add considerably to our general stock of knowledge. The immense advance made of late years in the studies of geology, mineralogy, and meteorology, is due, in great measure, to amateur students. Discovery paid and organised by government is always an after-thought. You may, with three simple instruments—the thermometer, the barometer, and the rain-gauge—add no insignificant

item to the general knowledge of the laws of climate. With a hammer and only as much book-knowledge as a small handbook will supply, you may, in distant countries, materially increase our daily-enlarging stores of geological knowledge. Indeed, you may, when abroad, advance these sciences far more efficiently than much abler men can do at home. Chemistry and the mathematics may, speaking generally, be studied in any civilised place; but these studies must be, in the main, local; and it is seldom, in the history of scientific discovery, that a Humboldt can devote whole years to travel, while an English soldier *must* travel far and wide. Natural history, too, you may well advance both by rod and gun. Only lately we have been told that M. Agassiz has discovered already hundreds of fishes, hitherto unknown, in the Amazon alone. Englishmen are widely famous for the energy and pluck they show in hunting wild animals, and many a poor Hindoo villager blesses the day when first a party of English officers pitched their tents near, and slew their dreaded tigers. This same hunting expedition might enrich a private natural-history collection at home, or add

valuable specimens to your local museum, or even supply a deficiency in the already overladen shelves of our great national collection.

A man must have some employment in the army, over and above his profession. Happily Englishmen have too superabundant energies to spend hours making and smoking cigarettes, as a Spanish gentleman will do. There is this further argument to encourage you to take up some study; that if you don't, you are sure to take up with some mischievous amusement, or learn to idle and fritter away your time in a manner unworthy of any reasonable man. You know how constantly men have to leave the army from debt contracted entirely out of idleness and a silly recklessness either in gambling or horse-racing. Our gardens *will* grow something: put in good seed, work and cultivate them, and you will have a plentiful return; neglect them, and they won't remain passive, growing neither good nor evil; it only depends upon the nature of the soil what sort of weeds will flourish there: therefore, don't give them a chance; fill up the ground—every inch of it—with whatever suits your turn of mind: first giving place to those

studies which I have tried to show you it is your absolute duty to prosecute, and which alone can fit you for the higher ranks of the honourable profession you have chosen.

To sum up, then, in few words, my previous arguments. You have, in the vast extent of the British territories, a wider range for general observation than any members of any other profession can have. You have, from the nature of your duties, an immense amount of time at your disposal; you are sure to misuse that time if you don't employ it well—there is no middle path. You have chosen a profession where the minimum of knowledge required by regulation is small, but that required to make a man a good officer is really considerable, and therefore you are bound in honour to acquire that knowledge. These studies are both interesting and very unrestricted, giving you so free an option that it is impossible that you should not have a taste for some. And, finally, your very amusement and observations in foreign countries may be of the greatest service towards increasing the general stock of human knowledge, to which it is equally a pleasure and an honour to add,

inasmuch as the experience of history teaches with unvarying uniformity that whatever adds to the knowledge adds to the happiness and the security of our race. We were born to be the lords of created nature; only ignorant nations are its slaves; but this supremacy is only to be won and maintained by studying the laws of nature, by ever accumulating fresh stores of knowledge: and none have a grander or richer field to work than those whose duties call them to brave every climate, and watch over the interests of our fellow-subjects in every quarter of our globe.

## VI.

### AN OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF C. J. NAPIER.

**I**N the toughest and bloodiest of all his many battles, “the day he overcame the Nervii,” Cæsar tells us how he was completely surprised by the enemy, and forced into a general engagement without having made the slightest preparation to meet the danger. Of his troops, some were at work with mattock, spade, and axe—true Roman weapons as much as spear or sword—fortifying the camp; some were scattered further a-field looking for materials for the chevaux-de-frise for the rampart; some had not yet arrived on the field; no scarlet flag, the signal for battle, was displayed, no bugle-calls sounded, no speech made to the soldiers, no watchword passed;—and the Imperial historian adds, so short was the interval, and so rapid the enemy’s assault, that most of this was left undone. Then what in the world saved his army from



being doubled up, crushed, and swept into space by the most ferocious and resolute of all the Gallic tribes? Let Cæsar's own words reply; none can be terser or more to the point: "*his difficultatibus duæ res erant subsidio, scientia atque usus militum.*" The two things which saved them were the soldiers' scientific and practical knowledge of war; they understood the theory, and had already tested it in practice; they brought both to bear upon the crisis, and converted imminent ruin into a decisive victory.

"*Scientia atque usus*"—there lies the key to all success in every profession; in the army remarkably so. And I now propose to give you a sketch of the life of a soldier, whose brilliant career was, by his own admission—his own boast rather—due to the honourable and persevering study of the art of war, and of all other branches of knowledge that would throw any light upon the main study of his life.

And let me not be mistaken. I do not hold up Charles James Napier as a pattern man, or even as a perfect soldier: a soldier in a constitutional country at least ought to possess more self-control, to show less con-

tempt for the foolish opinions of those by whom he is surrounded and by whom he will, if he gives offence, be surely thwarted; he must be less credulous, and far more pliant than this gallant officer ever was. Like the great hero of the Greeks, he too was

“Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer;”

Bold, passionate, unbending, vehement;

like him too,

“Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.”

He would recklessly disdain the “ignominious tyrants” of the East, and be anxious to fight a duel with any one who criticised his conduct. But all this only made his seat a more difficult one to retain; his brilliant campaigns and wonderfully successful rule only shine more successfully out of clouds which would have totally eclipsed the light of any mind less vigorous or talented. Avoid his errors, if you can; the ardent pursuit of his profession you certainly can imitate, for the acquisition of knowledge demands only industry and zeal.

You can hardly start in your profession with less knowledge than the Napiers possessed. It is certain that William, the great

historian, the only military author of repute since Raleigh, could not spell when he joined the army. Charles had not apparently had much education, but he had what is worth cart-loads of knowledge compulsorily attained—namely, zeal; the knowledge was sure to follow.

In some respects, no doubt, Charles Napier possessed a few singular advantages; but we must never forget how heavily these were counterbalanced by the many enmities he managed, justly or unjustly, to collect around him in his official life. The outline of his early military career runs thus: gazetted at seventeen, he had eight years of uninterrupted peace before war broke out, the terrible Peninsular war—four of the bloodiest years of which he served through; then a short interval of peace; then a brief campaign on the American coast, followed by six years of unbroken peace and study, until he was appointed to his post in the Ionian Islands, at the age of thirty-seven. Thrice again in his life he appears in a public capacity, and on each occasion with acknowledged success and honourable distinction: as Commandant of the Northern Military Division in Eng-

land, during the Chartist movements; as Governor in Scinde; and as Commander-in-Chief in India.

Now, you will observe that during the earlier years of his military career, years during which the character is formed, and the attainments acquired for life—say from seventeen, when he joined, to thirty-seven, when he received his first great command,—out of these twenty years about five were spent in active warfare. What became of the other fifteen?

Consummate as no doubt were his natural talents for war, great as was the military knowledge—the *scientia atque usus*—he gained under so accomplished a king of men as Sir John Moore, it is not merely this military skill that astonishes a reader of his biography: it is his vast acquaintance with a hundred other branches of knowledge,—civil-engineering, political organisation, insight into the political as well as the social characteristics of savage clans, sound and enlarged views on the subject of trade, a prescient judgment of its future course, civil government in all its branches and in every detail. Now none of this knowledge comes by nature; the fifteen years of peace

which elapsed between the ages of seventeen and thirty-seven will, if examined, tell us very accurately whence all this varied information and rich experience came; he carried with him the wide experience of the best men who had gone before him, and arrived at each post to which he was summoned a practical administrator, requiring only to see and hear the data in each separate case. And while others would be rack-ing empty brains for heaven-sent ideas, he solved the various problems of government or command by the application of principles with which he had long been familiar. In fact, it was with him individually what was the case with Sir J. Moore's famous Light Division collectively: they were acknowledged as veterans the first day they went into battle in Spain; so trained were they by constant practice — so inured to the strictest discipline—that whatever disasters befel other regiments, they seemed by some fatality exempt from all; and in the famous march to Corunna, though they covered the retreat, they lost less men than other regiments who had only to march without fighting. But Corunna was won at the camp at Shorncliffe, and Charles Napier's victories

on the field ; and success in government was equally won in his study, years before he held any higher command than that of a regiment.

Of his studies previous to the outbreak of the Peninsular war we have not the full detail that we have of the later ones ; but one short notice of what he was at the age of twenty-four will account for much of his future success. "Amidst these men" (the officers of the famous Light Division) "Charles Napier's strong character was soon noticed. Nothing drew him from his study ; he never gambled, drank no wine, had but few intimates, was mostly absorbed in thought, and though ready for good-fellowship in all manly games, eschewed it in the mess-room." It was now, if ever, that he enjoyed any of those "peculiar advantages" which idleness generally ascribes to those who have risen, and excuses itself by the absence of the same. The peculiar advantages of Napier's life were these two, shared in common with many gallant men at that time ; the first of which may perhaps not be regarded as peculiarly advantageous by some young officers of to-day : firstly, his strict training in every branch of military duty under Sir J. Moore

at Shorncliffe; and secondly, the opportunity of testing this discipline and skill in the fiery furnace of war for the four next eventful years of life.

That he was already, at the age of twenty-seven, no mean critic of large military operations, his strictures upon the Talavera campaign will prove: the justice of which the Duke admitted in after years; the excuse being that he was deceived by false information, and was compelled to advance on political grounds alone.

At the age of thirty-one Napier found himself in this position; he had seen fourteen years' service, had been terribly wounded, engaged in four great battles, served also actively on the American coast, risen by hard work alone through every grade up to Lieutenant-colonel; and was now, by the sudden arrival of peace, reduced to half-pay—peace which gave every promise of being lasting, and which did last for the next forty years in Europe, broken only by the brief and sudden tempest of the one-hundred days. But Napier had made the army his profession; and just when those who had not so made it would have given up in despair, he recommenced those studies which made

him, a quarter of a century later, the foremost soldier of his time.

*"Nil actum reputans dum quid superesset agendum,"*

seems to have been his motto at this time; and he sowed the seed from which he reaped, so many years later, so abundant a harvest.

As to what those studies consisted in, let the heading of one chapter in his biography speak for itself. I copy it word for word: "Exchange to the 50th Regiment—Military College—Notes—War—Conquest—Alexander the Great—Hannibal—Order of Battle—Cavalry—Booty—Horses—Armour—Command—Soldiers' Marriages—Dress—Baggage—Freedom—Rienzi—Languages—Lawyers—Nations—Strange Dreams—Epigrams." And, later still, we read in his life that at the age of thirty-four, "war was over, he was still on half-pay, and his future was unpromising; yet his note-book shows that general literature, commerce, agriculture, civil-engineering, and building—especially structures for the poor—political economy, and international law, were subjects of study as well as war and government."

It might be supposed that in so large a range of reading, of subjects so various and



so dissimilar, details would be neglected necessarily : but you will find very noticeable instances of the closest attention to very minute details, such as the computation of saving a thousand horses in any army of fifty regiments, by copying the French model and having the officer's personal baggage carried amongst the men of his own company—one man carrying shirts, another socks, &c. And yet this close examination of details is consistent with the clearest and widest generalisation, as when he says, “ If ever I command a cavalry regiment, I will never lose sight of three things—rigid discipline for the body, fencing for the individual, a light load for the horse.” This note he wrote at Bermuda at the age of thirty-one ; and this was the forging of the bolt : the bolt was launched with deadly effect against some of our most mischievous enemies in Scinde thirty years later, “ when he organised and taught the famous Scinde Light Horse, whose excellence became proverbial.”

There are too, and there must ever be, times in the life of a commanding-officer when he will be called upon to act, and that promptly and with decision, and in cases too which may severely test his judgment, and

demand the exercise of much tact and discretion. Now, these difficulties are just the points in life on which distinction or extinction hinge: no wise man will wait for their arrival; most of them, all perhaps, may be forestalled, and the mind may be so habituated to the examination of a few main principles, that all circumstances, however apparently various, must fall within the scope of one of them. If you have never studied the main-springs of character, you must clearly be unequal to decide upon questions demanding that knowledge for their solution: if you have, for instance, decided, with Charles Napier, that "change in itself is bad," you will avoid a common error of men in office, the issuing of frequent orders; and as you issue but few, you will value them the more highly, and enforce them rigidly; you will be astonished, when you think it over, to find how large an area a few main principles cover—not merely in your own, but in every profession in life. The three alone that Napier dwells upon, in the note headed "commanding-officer," would avoid a thousand blunders: first, issue few orders; second, see that every one you issue is exactly obeyed, letter and spirit; third, avoid the

habit of scolding,—punish severely, if necessary, but don't scold. Now, what I want particularly to bring before you is the fact, that the acquisition of these principles of conduct are no less the fruit of study and quiet thought, than a knowledge of strategy, or a profound acquaintance with military history.

This was how the fifteen years of peace were passed; and let his four commands testify to the harvest he reaped from them. Witness in Cephalonia, roads carried along precipices and over chasms, new harbours projected, light-houses raised, public buildings erected, the mischievous old feudal authority crushed, reforms carried out in every department, and the revenue largely increased. Witness in the Northern military district of England, his wise and humane dealing with the misguided men who sought to gain by civil war what is fairly attainable by honest political agitation; his inviting some of the Chartist leaders to the barracks, and showing them the manœuvres of a battery of horse-artillery, upon which they returned sadder and wiser men—advising moral and not physical-force Chartism for the future. Witness in Scinde his two great victories against

some of the bravest warriors in India, with odds of about fifteen to one against him; his just and generous government of the conquered nations; the records of his active brain and far-reaching hand every where—baggage and camel corps organised; principles readily adopted with masterly versatility to meet the exigencies of climate or character; witness the present mercantile greatness of Kurrachee, his favourite child, and the growing traffic on the Indus, his prophecy of twenty-five years ago; his perfectly unique campaign against the robbers of the Cutchee hills; his vast engineering plans for irrigation and recovery of land from the flooding of the Indus; in a word, a large country recovered from the misrule of the basest and most degraded tyrants, and brought into a state of quiet contentment and industry—the spade superseding the sword, the robber converted into the labourer.

But this is but a crude, bare, and most imperfect outline of this great soldier's career: the whole picture is well worth a very careful study; but as you study it, remember where its successes were really won; where the foundation was laid on which

could be raised so brilliant a superstructure; how it was that an old soldier was found to be an accomplished administrator and successful governor. The secret of the mystery lay in the spell, so simple indeed, but to so many so distasteful, expressed by the old poet in the words, "*labor omnia vincit improbus*," or in the Christian motto of "*qui laborat orat*." Nor was this amassing of knowledge upon many topics valuable only in a purely scientific view of the military life; his meditations upon character, and the various methods by which varieties of character are to be addressed and won, are well exemplified in his life. It is generally noticed that characters such as his, fearless and impetuous, are generous and forgiving; but they don't often display such genial tact and thoughtfulness as are expressed in that famous letter, in vol. ii. p. 445, to an officer on neglect of duty—a neglect covered by a false pretence of conscientiousness; or such humorous kindliness as beams through every word of his letter to a private soldier, in vol. iii. p. 43, where he recommends petitioner to promotion, if he is, as he says he is, a remarkably sober man—and signs himself "Charles Napier, Major-general and

Governor of Scinde, because I have always been a remarkably sober man." No one will wonder, after reading these and many letters and other documents of a similar character, at the passionate love felt for him by privates and officers alike; at such hearty enthusiasm as was well expressed by a young officer (vol. iii. p. 346): "When I see that old man on his horse, how can I be idle, who am young and strong? By God, I would go into a loaded cannon's mouth if he ordered me!" No wonder that a campaign pronounced impossible should succeed gloriously, when, after taking every precaution, and making every preparation, a general could act so decisively on principles based on a profound acquaintance with character as Napier does (vol. iii. p. 218); an argument, be it observed, not merely logically irrefragable, but shortly proved conclusive by the still more irrefragable logic "of facts," the unconditional submission of hill-tribes, which had set at naught all conquerors—from the great Iskander downwards—who from their rocky fastnesses had laughed at the helpless attempts of great generals for certainly two thousand years.

It is easy enough to despise display and

denounce luxury when neither your means nor your position will support or sanction either; it would be natural for a private soldier to declaim against the flagrant injustice of a court-martial which would break a private and honourably acquit an officer on charges of drunkenness equally proved in either case; an Indian officer naturally prized the long services and discipline of the native sepoy; and educated and highly-refined civilians have borne witness to the courteous manners of a Hindoo gentleman; a subaltern, smarting beneath his severity, will not unreasonably denounce a martinet: but it demands a rare combination of gifts—some natural, more acquired by study and thought—to be equal to all these various influences. A man must have large sympathies who could write and act as Napier wrote and acted, when a general officer in high command, on these and many more kindred topics or occasions. And remember kindness alone will not create sympathy, any more than a good intention will complete a good action: for the latter you need also perseverance; for the former knowledge of the position and circumstances of the person with whom you sympathise.

Shakespeare, with his world-wide sympathies, did not create his hundreds of undying characters but by keen observation and incessant thought.

I am told that this life of Napier is much more read amongst young officers than it was a few years ago. No one who has the well-being of the English army at heart but would heartily rejoice if such is the case; it is only by some such example that the mischief will be met, so clearly foreseen long ago by Napier himself,—the mischief which must ensue when the officers think little of duty except as an inevitable bore, and value amusement as of all importance, and imagine that to belong to a fast regiment is *the thing*; i.e. “a regiment unfit for service, commanded by an adjutant, and having a mess in debt; while, on the other hand, the private soldier goes daily to school or to his library—now always at hand—and thus daily acquires knowledge, while his dignified officer goes to the billiard-room or the smoking-room.”

If what I have now written should induce you to read—no, not read, but study, note, digest Charles Napier’s life—it will be some reward for the little trouble this out-



line has cost me ; for be sure of this, that after his worst enemies or warmest friends have “nothing exaggerated, nor set down aught in malice” about his character, he was a man, and emphatically a soldier, “take him for all in all, we shall not look upon his like again.”

## VII.

### HOW IS ONE TO WRITE AN ESSAY?

**I**T is singular that so much difficulty is made about English composition, considering that the material you have to work in is the language you have known from your cradle; and it is almost more singular that you should assert your difficulties to be increased by the fact of your never having written an essay at school in your life. Now, you have done original Latin prose composition for years; at some schools not a week passes without your having to send in a theme—that is to say an essay on some given subject; and as the principles of composition in all languages are identical—as language is but the flesh which enfolds the same skeleton in all cases—I do not understand why you find this difficulty that you complain about so despairingly.

Now composition, as its name implies, is

simply to *compono*; to arrange your subject in intelligible form; to marshal your troops as an army, instead of getting them clubbed—as not a few writers do—as a mob. That remarkable genius for organisation which the French display equally in all departments of the government, and in arranging an *émeute* to overturn the government when perfectly organised, they display equally in all, and especially in their periodical literature. An article in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, for instance, is quite a lesson in literary organisation to many of our writers; from first to last the writer never lets you lose sight of the main object of his writing; even if forced by circumstances into an occasional digression, he will be sure to keep you always in sight of the port you are steering for, and to land you safely there at last.

Now, there are three indispensable requisites for writing on any subject in any language: 1st, a fair knowledge of the resources of the language you are about to employ; this I will discuss in a future letter, assuming now that you know enough of your own language to express your ideas fluently and correctly in it: 2dly, a knowledge of the

subject given you for your essay: 3dly, a lucid arrangement of the ideas you have formed on your subject, which latter is technically termed composition.

One great—perhaps the greatest—cause of failure is the absence of the second requisite. A man's innate sense or taste will, in many cases, supply a deficiency of formal knowledge of the third requisite; if a man is naturally clear-headed, he won't talk or write confusedly; but no amount of mother-wit can supply ideas on subjects about which you have never thought or read, or (what is often most useful) conversed; you are like the Israelites turned out into the fields brick-making without that most important item, the straw.

Now, all the innumerable subjects that can be proposed for an essay are contained in one of two classes: they are either simple or compound. Under the first are reckoned such subjects as "the Feudal System," "Commerce," the name of a place, *e.g.* London, Gibraltar: on such subjects you will write historically or descriptively, rather than argumentatively. In the second are placed such subjects as "Slavery, the curse of the country that maintains it," "The power of

public opinion is irresistible:" these must be treated argumentatively. Now, whatever be the subject, it is clear that you can't draw water from an empty well; and if you have never discussed or read and thought about slavery, and are suddenly set down to a desk, with however ample a provision of writing materials, you will be totally helpless and incapable of either treating it historically and generally, or investigating the causes which make it an equal curse to master and slave alike. In a word, here too, as happily every where, you will find that only industry and mental activity can supply you with the requisite materials; you have not yet got so far as your scaffolding; you have not yet collected your bricks and mortar, and timber and slates; and, as in actual building, industry alone must apply them. When we come to the scaffolding question, then skill and judgment are required, but as yet industry alone for collecting the materials.

These materials can be drawn only from two sources—reading and conversation: and by reading I don't mean merely the reading of books—though, if you want to gain a full insight into any subject, you must have recourse to them—but rather reading, or, still

better, if you have the opportunity, listening to good lectures on any subject that interests you; and better still, hearing a full and warm debate in the Houses of Parliament upon some question of policy: then you will hear both sides of the question, and your judgment will be called more actively into play, as well as your attention. Spirited conversation, too, is a capital field for instruction, in which you are either a listener or a combatant; there, too, you see a question well sifted, with less formality, and therefore less mental effort than is demanded for a "debate in the house."

Supposing, then, that your materials are collected well in hand for immediate use, your next step is to set up your scaffolding—that is to say, to write out the heads of what you intend to say, all arranged exactly in the order in which you intend them to come in your composition.

But example is better than precept. I will show you how a master in composition wrote a treatise or essay on "Old Age," which the opinion of many generations has pronounced a master-piece; an essay so perfect in its composition that you never for a moment lose the thread of the argument—so

clear in illustration, that each page convinces you more fully of the invincibility of the writer's position—expressed in language so choice and refined, that had his other works been lost, the charm of this alone would place its author amongst the first of the greatest of Latin writers. I shall gladly welcome the opportunity, too, at the same time, of showing you that the principles of composition are absolutely identical in all good writers, whatever material they may happen to have worked in.

Now, the point of view from which Cicero approaches his subject is to examine the charges usually brought against old age, and to refute them each in order. I shall refer to the chapters for convenience, though of course they were not specified by Cicero, though they follow accurately his own divisions of the subject. The first chapter, then, is what we should call the dedication and preface: he dedicates the essay to his friend Atticus; gives his reasons for writing at all on the subject, and also for composing it in the form of a dialogue; the subject is introduced from chapters ii. to v., where Scipio and Lælius are represented eliciting from the old Cato his sentiments on the sub-

ject of old age, who fortifies his position with respect to the usefulness of old age by copious references to the experiences of men he had known of the past generation, and by quoting examples drawn from other countries besides his own.

Thus the subject is fairly laid open before the reader; then the author distinctly informs you the heads under which the subject will be discussed, and the order in which they come. Cato tells us he will reply to each of the four charges in turn; and they are these: firstly, its removing us from active life; secondly, its weakening the natural powers; thirdly, its depriving us of almost all our pleasures; and, fourthly, its close vicinity to death. The first point he discusses in chapters vi. vii. and viii. In reply to the first charge, the writer represents Cato as holding to the "irresistible logic of facts," and quoting many an instance from their own history of the valuable services conferred upon the state by the wisdom of the old men in council; and indeed maintains truly enough that the prudence and carefulness of age is needed in the commonweal to counterbalance the recklessness and impetuosity of youth: this he rightly considers



so demonstrable from reason and their own history, that he dwells the less on the subject, and passes on quickly to the second point, which is examined in chapters ix. x. and xi. The gist of old Cato's argument is this: you say the natural powers are abated by old age; granted, if you mean a man's physical strength; but if you mean his mental faculties, I deny it altogether. And again he illustrates his point by many felicitous anecdotes drawn from his vast stores of historical knowledge, and by his own example; he was himself an author at the age of eighty. The third division of his subject he discusses at much greater length—the charge against old age of depriving us of almost all our pleasures: this he continues until the end of the eighteenth chapter, and replies to most fully; first, by gladly admitting the truth of the charge, if by pleasure is meant the violent passions of youth; and, secondly, by denying the truth of it altogether, if by pleasure is meant the supreme delight of adding daily to one's stores of knowledge, of communicating that knowledge to others, of enjoying well-ordered society, and, most of all, of pursuing the study of agriculture, which the old Roman

dwells upon with all the love that the most active minds of the most active-minded nations have ever shown for this pursuit: this leads the writer into a considerable digression upon the pleasures of farming—enlivened by some good anecdotes illustrative of the advantages of rural life and occupations for old age. The fourth and last division of his subject begins at the nineteenth chapter, and continues to the end of the book; it is in itself a complete and very eloquent essay on the question, “whether the neighbourhood of death to old age is an evil;” for the old, he argues, death is the natural conclusion of life, and he fondly dwells upon the recollection of the many Romans of former days who had rushed to meet a voluntary death at the hands of their enemies for their country’s sake, and these both young and often uneducated men; a weighty lesson, he asserts, to us, who are certainly old, and consider ourselves well educated. But the real consolation in death is the hope of meeting the great and good in the other world; and this belief he expounds in language of undying force and beauty—in language so choice and powerful that, had no speeches of the great writer come

down to us, we could have judged that his eloquence was of no common order from this peroration alone.

As a summary, then, of the lesson of composition to be drawn from this treatise, we will suppose that Cicero wrote out—certainly had in his mind before he began the actual writing—an abstract of it, that ran thus: Dedication to my friend Atticus—Introduction of subject—Dialogue—Cato chief speaker—The worth of old age—Four main charges to be refuted. Such would really be the first outline of the subject, the first sketching-in of the figures in a picture. And now, to show you how such brief notes as these are capable of expansion—how some sinews are laid upon the bones before the flesh is completed—how some good stout scaffolding is erected before you begin your bricks and mortar,—we will suppose the author looking over the first charge against old age, viz. “that it removes a man from active life:” from outline the argument is thus worked up more fully: What is meant by active life? Of active mental life our ancestors furnish innumerable examples—quote Ennius or Appius Claudius—illustrate by the old pilot at the helm—let Cato quote

his own example of active interference in state affairs—Senatus derived from Senes—quote Nævius on the mischief wrought by the inconsiderateness of youth—examine the charge of failure of memory—Themistocles and myself evidence to the contrary—no old man forgets what it is to his own interest to remember—memory a matter of industry— anecdote of Sophocles' *Œdipus Coloneus*— collect instances of powerful memories among the poets, the philosophers—examine briefly whether the society of the old is disagreeable.

This would be sufficient framework to rest his building operations on; and be assured that a system of construction which great writers have not disdained, little writers must gratefully avail themselves of. All the rest of Cicero's argument may be analysed in the same manner; and exactly as I have picked to pieces before your eyes this one of the most perfect essays in Roman literature, so you may treat a good composition in any language; the same rules hold good whatever is the nature of the composition: if you examine a speech of Demosthenes, of Cicero, or of Burke, you will find introduction and explanation of the subject; secondly, a review of all the arguments that will maintain their

own and impugn their adversaries' position ; lastly, a peroration as it is called, or conclusion, briefly recapitulating the previous arguments, and appealing strongly to the feelings of their hearers : it is to these perorations that one looks for the highest efforts of oratory, last impressions being always most important, the feelings of the speaker and his audience being ever kindled into mutual sympathy, and the orator conscious of the necessity of throwing himself into one last effort for the interests of his cause. But here I am rather wandering into the second division of my subject, viz. style ; at present I have a little more to say about the structure of your essay.

If, then, you really wish to compose well, you must practise yourself in making abstracts—I have shown you how already—first of short essays ; take any good articles in a good weekly review, the *Spectator* or the *Saturday* for instance ; then try longer articles, such as you will find in *Macmillan's*, the *Fortnightly*, or one of the *Quarterlies* ; don't be afraid of not finding enough work in an analysis of this kind ; you will find in some articles much to imitate, in some as much to avoid. Notice, what is so difficult to a

beginner at English composition, the commencements of good essays; how the subject is ushered into society, sometimes by an anecdote, sometimes by a quotation, sometimes by a simple statement of who he is; he sends in, in fact, his name and business. Notice too, in a really good essay, how, after the completion of the building, the scaffolding has been carefully removed, and all signs of it effaced.

And now, I think, if you find much difficulty in composing, on a moderate scale at least, the difficulty will lie elsewhere; where, I expect, it mostly lies—not in ignorance of the principles of building, but in want of materials wherewith to build: that deficiency I have already discussed, and its remedy; but if you read, and discuss conversationally, and pick up all information from every quarter, you will not long feel hampered by this difficulty. There is no royal road to this more than to any other branch of learning; if you would always be ready to meet your foes in war, you must keep your armoury well filled and well furbished in time of peace.

## VIII.

### ON STYLE.

**L**OOK at this picture: "Flanders is subdued; the Ocean and the Mediterranean are reunited; vast harbours are excavated; a chain of fortresses encircles France; the colonnades of the Louvre are raised; the gardens of Versailles are designed; the workmen of the Low Countries and Holland find themselves excelled by the new workshops of France; a rivalry in labour, in fame, in greatness, spreads every where; a new and splendid language recounts and glorifies these wonders for all future time. Boileau's letters are dated from the conquests of Louis XIV.; Racine puts upon the stage the weaknesses and elegancies of the court; Molière surrenders his mighty genius to the greatness of the throne; La Fontaine himself appreciates the great deeds of the young king and becomes his flatterer. Such is the brilliant

picture presented us by the first twenty years of this memorable reign."

Now on this: "The twilight of history first dawns upon us in Asia; and through all succeeding centuries, during which Africa still remained almost entirely sunk in profound darkness, and Europe itself arose tardily and laboriously from out of the same, there hovers a light over Asia which shows us great revolutions, whose arena it was, not indeed in equal, but in ever-increasing clearness; so that we can survey its progress in every thing, and thence draw general principles to unlock the history of our race. The further we travel back into this history, the more we compare the Sagas of the nations one with another from their origin and their later accidents, and the more we learn withal to recognise the differences of their external civilisation, the more we shall be always led back to Asia; and the more probable does it appear that man has his home peculiarly there, however much he may have raised or degraded himself in other divisions of the world, under foreign skies, and under the influence of favourable and unfavourable circumstances."

Now these are quotations from two books



of prose extracts, compiled respectively by a Frenchman and a German for the tuition of their respective youth: the German book is published "by authority," and is the German reading-book for the middle classes of their higher academies: either therefore may be taken as a representative book, and no one who knows any thing of French and German prose will assert that the quotations I have made are other than honest representatives of French and German style respectively. Those styles are at the very opposite poles of composition; the former delighting in sentences brief and perspicuous, the latter in such as are lengthy and laborious: indeed my extract is a very moderate example of the German; easily could sentences be quoted of double and treble the length; some of Kant's would fill an octavo page. The tendency of the former is no doubt to monotony and to effects somewhat spasmodic; that of the latter to confusion and hopeless obscurity: but whereas the tendency of the German writers to their error is a constant quantity, and that a very large one, that of the French is a comparatively trifling one. The French style is always lively, translucent, harmonious; the German (with the excep-

tion of three or four of their great writers) is nebulous, perplexed, and wearisome; and for this reason he piles clause on clause until the overloaded sentence sinks in the waters of confusion. I do not deny he writes *fortiter in re*; his thoughts, muddy in expression, are original and profound; but the vehicle he conveys those thoughts in to your door!—it reminds one of one of his own eilwagen, such as were common enough a few years back in unvisited parts of Germany, and called in bitter mockery “post-haste chaises,” with timber enough in them to have built a jolly-boat, with rope-harness and jades of posters, the lineal descendants (probably) of the steed immortalised by Shakespeare that carried Petruchio to wed the Shrew.

If, then, the first great object of style is to present your thoughts in an intelligible form to your reader or hearer, form your sentences simple and decisive, with few and brief clauses; interpose here and there a simple sentence of only one clause if possible; avoid parentheses as far as you possibly can; if the choice lies between repetition and obscurity, choose the former instantly as the lesser fault: repetition may

throw some further light even if it is monotonous ; obscurity is fatal, subversive of the only object of your expressing your ideas in language at all.

And now that we have decided that the French model should be chosen, and the German eschewed, for the framework of our sentences, I will quote an anecdote of De Quincey's to guide us in our choice of words ; and you can have no better example of a manly, nervous, and refined English style than De Quincey's. " Some eight years ago," he tells us, " we had occasion to look for lodgings in a newly-built suburb of London to the south of the Thames. The mistress of the house was in regular training, it appeared, as a student of newspapers. She had no children ; the newspapers were her children. There lay her studies ; that branch of learning constituted her occupation from morning to night ; and the following were among the words which she—this semibarbarian—poured from her cornucopia during the very few minutes of our interview ; which interview was brought to an abrupt issue by mere nervous agitation upon our part. The words, as noted down within an hour of the occasion, and after allowing a

fair time for our recovery, were these : first, ‘category;’ secondly, ‘predicament;’ thirdly, ‘individuality;’ fourthly, ‘procrastination;’ fifthly, ‘speaking diplomatically would not wish to commit herself;’ sixthly, ‘would spontaneously adopt the several modes of domestication to the reciprocal interests;’ and finally (which word it was that settled us), seventhly, ‘anteriorly;’ concerning which word we solemnly declare and make affidavit that neither from man, woman, or book, had we ever heard it before this unique rencontre with this abominable woman on the staircase. The occasion which furnished the excuse for such a word was this : from the staircase window we saw a large shed in the rear of the house ; apprehending some nuisance of ‘manufacturing industry’ in our neighbourhood, ‘What’s that?’ we demanded. Mark the answer : ‘A shed ; that’s what it is : *vide licet* a shed ; and anteriorly to the existing shed there was—’ *What* there was posterity must consent to have wrapt up in darkness ; for there came on our nervous seizure, which intercepted further communication. But observe as a point which took away any gleam of consolation from the case, the total absence of all *malaprop* picturesque-

ness, that might have defeated its deadly action upon the nervous system. No; it is due to the integrity of *her* disease, and to the completeness of *our* suffering, that we should attest the unimpéachable correctness of her words, and of the syntax by which she connected them."

The style of all the better and more influential newspapers has no doubt improved since De Quincey related this humorous anecdote; but in the smaller provincial prints you will find language as "tall" and meaningless still; in American papers you will see it in its rankest luxuriance. Like bad taste in dress or furniture, or bad manners, it has its uses; the same which our ancestors thought they extracted from the exhibition of gibbeted highwaymen up and down the high-roads. But there is a deeper truth still, besides the warning, to be gathered from that sublime vulgarity "anteriorly." The sources of our noble English language are double; Rome gave us one, Germany the other; and the worthy landlady, like many of the "great semi-educated," drew from the former well in preference to the latter: these sources are so distinct that not merely passages but whole books have been almost ex-

clusively composed in either of the two dialects, if I may so term them; it is this double source that gives our language its peculiar richness and munificence. From the German we draw words of narrative and simple description, from the Roman words of thought and passion; from the one the language of childhood, from the other that of reason, the maturer power of manhood: our position is unique amongst the languages of Europe, probably of the world; we can write in two languages at once; not a word but has its synonym, many two or three, not that they are even exact equivalents, but sufficiently so for ordinary purposes; and to prove to you this is no mere paradox, I would refer you to the writings of such men as John Bunyan, Swift, and Cobbett, for Saxon, and Jeremy Taylor and Johnson for Latin-English. You will find whole pages in either set of authors, where one has hardly a word of Latin origin, and the other not a word of Saxon, except prepositions and auxiliaries, and such as are unavoidable. Compare, or rather contrast these two extracts; I have purposely drawn them from simple narratives of journeys, one through Hampshire, the other through Scotland; and judge for yourself how the simpli-

city of Saxon-English excels the laboriousness of the Latinised, wherever the latter is not demanded by the more complex character of the subject.

“We got leave to go and see the grounds at Waverley, where all the old monks’ garden-walls are totally gone, and where the spot is become a sort of lawn. I showed him the spot where the strawberry-garden was, and where I, when sent to gather hautboys, used to eat every remarkably fine one, instead of letting it go to be eaten by Sir Robert Rich. I showed him a tree close by the ruins of the abbey, from a limb of which I once fell into the river, in an attempt to take the nest of a crow, which had artfully placed it upon a branch so far from the trunk as not to be able to bear the weight of a boy eight years old. I showed him an old elm-tree which was hollow even then, into which I, when a very little boy, saw a cat go, which was as big as a middle-sized spaniel-dog; for relating which I got a great scolding, for standing to which I at last got a beating, but stand to which I still did; I have since many times repeated it, and I would take my oath of it to this day.” And so for pages together of Cobbett’s clear and

simple narrative you will not find a single Latin intruder into his domain of uncorrupted English prose. And now listen respectfully to the language of the great critic of the eighteenth century.

“We are now treading that illustrious island which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions; whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force on the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.”

With the exception of the last sentence, the style of which is excellent, thanks to its simplicity, what pompous, laboured, “tall”



talk all this is! And yet our grandfathers thought this as magnificent as it certainly is magniloquent; happily Burns, Scott, and Byron, and Cobbett, Wordsworth, and Southey have lived since then to redeem us from such lifeless artificialities.

As a rule, then, never use a long word when a short one is equally expressive; never use a Latinised word when a homely Saxon one will suit as well. On the other hand, there is a pedantry to be avoided here too: when you get beyond simple subjects and ordinary narrative into the higher regions of argument, or philosophy, or criticism, freely use the words they demand, which our language, above all others, is rich in: don't despise its wealth, but don't employ it on unsuitable objects: to "narrate" a journey in Johnson's *sesquipedalia verba* is just to build a boat with timbers cut out for a ship.

It is a frequent and not an unreasonable complaint, that the clergy choose their words from a vocabulary utterly beyond the comprehension of most of their hearers. If they would adopt this simple rule, to expunge any word of Latin birth out of their sermons wherever a Saxon word would suit, this

would relieve them from half their dulness by removing all obscurity of their language at any rate. What think you would have been the fate of Bunyan's immortal book had he related the Pilgrim's journey in the ponderous "-osities" and "-ations" of Johnson, or the gorgeous Latinisms of Taylor? Would all Burns's true pathos and hearty humour have secured, rather I should say asserted, for his poems a place on every cottier's shelf, had not the language, simple, plain, unaffected, secured them a home in every cottier's memory? And so when English preachers again adopt old Latimer's simple Saxon and homely illustrations in their sermons, they too will find, as he did, no lack of audience or attention.

Adapt, therefore, your language to your subject, and your audience or your readers, as the case may be; always erring, if err you must, on the side of simplicity; just so in the composition of your sentences, marshal, as the French do, two deep, rather than as the Germans, ten, twenty, any thing up to infinity; and then too err, if err you must, on the side of perspicuity; fear nothing so much as the charge of artificial language and a cloudy style.

## IX.

### ON ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

**A**S yet I have spoken of style only with reference to your audience; now we will examine its principles on other grounds. At present I have treated it, as De Quincey has well put it, “as a mechanical process; whereas style is really organic;” that is to say, instinct with a life and power of its own. Every style, if truly developed, is just what good music is—really the reflection of the composer’s character, of his powers and disposition, intellectual and moral. This you can see at a glance by reference to the writings and speeches of the best authors and orators; their styles are remarkably different, and yet harmonise decidedly with their characters: the fervid temperament and impetuous pride of Chatham, the philosophic and cultivated mind of Burke, the calm, thoughtful, and judicial spirit of Hallam, are as visible in their works as in their biogra-

phies, and—*magnis componere parva*—it is so with us all. If your disposition is naturally quiet, amiable, and retiring, you may write as elegantly as Gray ; but if you aim to imitate the vivacity of Fielding, it will be but an imitation, a faint spectre, such a relation as the ghosts in Homer bore to men : but on the other hand, if your sense of the ridiculous and inconsistent is peculiarly keen, you may copy Swift's humour and solemn irony, and improve upon them by omitting his coarseness.

You will notice continually in the course of your reading how widely this truth is spread. In writing history, for instance, which demands a considerable variation in style, the statesman warms to the passages descriptive of great acts of policy and great state trials ; the soldier's style rises as his heart kindles at the description of battles and sieges ; the scientific or artistic mind dwells fondly on the progress of the victories of industry. And it is just here that the ancient writers had so great an advantage over us moderns—they lived so much more varied lives than we do, that they could throw themselves into the labours of writing with a rich experience, drawn not from a well-filled li-

brary, but from a personal knowledge of the occurrences in which they had themselves played no insignificant part. What wonder that Æschylus should recount in imperishable language the overthrow of the dreaded Persians, when he had himself been one of that gallant band who charged down the plain of Marathon in *the* decisive battle of the world? We talk, by the way, loosely enough of the decisive “battles,” in the plural; as if any battle yet fought by mortal man could compare with that which saved Athens from becoming the *chef-lien* of a prefecture in some bloated Asiatic satrapy; saved it for *her* own great future and our own, and all times,—the sacred altar from whence all coming generations should kindle their torches of science, literature, or art.

What marvel is it that Thucydides the scholar should write inspired by the fire of Thucydides the soldier, and the wisdom of Thucydides the politician? Or that Xenophon the well-educated country-gentleman should still claim our attention to the diaries of Xenophon the volunteer and general? Or that note-books of Cæsar’s should still interest—Cæsar the statesman, general, and first emperor of Rome; the one man of his

time who could read the future of his mighty country?

In each of these great writers, too, their style is unmistakably a reflected image of their own character; nor, if you think a moment upon it, could it well be otherwise, if a man is but "true to himself." It is impossible to conceive Hooker's style—Hooker, the father of English prose—as careless or undignified; or Dryden's, whose prose has happily outlived much of his verse, as feeble and obscure; or Gibbon's as mean and vulgar; or Burke's as incomplete and timid; or Napier's as tame. Each adopted, as all great writers have done, their own style, formed not unfrequently on the model of another, but not with any slavish imitation; they made their models' style their own, and thus their own became, as I said before, an organic, not a mere mechanical existence.

Now, as you are anxious to form a good style for yourself, I will extract some passages at once characteristic of some of our greatest writers, and expressive of a variety of feelings and passions, which each possessed more or less conspicuously, and which they have clothed in words, either with the aid of simple language, or

by adopting some figure of speech or peculiarity of style.

I have already spoken of the language and style suitable for a plain simple narrative of simple life—a style based on Cobbett and Swift, Cobbett's master—which you would do well to cultivate; as Turner worked for years with brown and gray tints alone, before he ventured to enter the realms of gorgeous colour, in which he afterwards reigned as king without a rival: but the moment you reach beyond this narrow limit, and have energetic action to describe, your language must rise to the occasion. See how Napier's does,—his sentences fall swift and decisive as one of his own rifle shot. If you would know how varied and rich a language ours is on one, and that a very narrow, topic, how lively, vigorous, and animated words themselves become in the hands of a master, himself full of lofty sentiment and generous sympathy with the scenes, deeds, and men he has immortalised,—read the battles and sieges in Napier's *Peninsular War*, and read this now as a sample; it is the closing scene at Albuera.

“Suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed on their terrible enemies: and then was seen with what a strength and majesty

the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult, by voice and gesture, animate his Frenchmen ; in vain did the hardiest veterans, extricating themselves from the crowded columns, sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open out on such a fair field ; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately upon friends and foes, while the horsemen hovering on the flank threatened to charge the advancing line. Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry ; no sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm, weakened the stability of their order ; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front ; their measured tread shook the ground ; their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation ; their deafening shouts overpowered the different cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd, as, foot by foot, and with a horrid carnage, it was driven by the incessant vigour of the attack to the furthest edge of the hill. In vain did the French reserves, joining with the struggling multitudes, endeavour to sustain the fight ; their efforts only increased the irremediable confusion, and the mighty mass giving way like a loosened



cliff went headlong down the ascent. The rain poured after in streams discoloured with blood, and fifteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal field."

And here observe, besides the impetuosity of the style, rivalling that of the soldiers it describes, how decidedly and persistently the narrative itself marches forwards; the sentences may be long, but they are never involved; and notice above all what Mrs. Malaprop liked so well, "a choice derangement of epitaphs;" each adjective and adverb fitting into its place almost as if placed there by Shakespeare's unerring hand. None but a master in composition can summon each epithet he requires, and set them without stint and yet without redundancy into the posts they are to occupy.

Amongst a crowd of writers not much inferior I must mention to you two who, invaluable in other respects, should also be read as masters in the art of descriptive writing; Macaulay, of scenes in history; Ruskin, of scenes in nature and criticisms in art. In the essays of the former the trial of Warren Hastings, and in his history the

battle of Sedgemoor, the trial of the seven bishops, and the siege of Londonderry, stand preëminent for vividness. You will see there all that language can do to recal the past. A reader must indeed have been denied by nature the gift of imagination who cannot see that dignified court, the gifted accusers, and the splendid throng that crowded to the impeachment of the great proconsul of India.

Macaulay is so well known, and his works so widely circulated, that you can easily find the places I have referred you to, and read them at length. Ruskin's are unfortunately less appreciated, partly from their great expense, partly from the fact that art is naturally not so popular a subject amongst Englishmen as political history. I will quote an extract from his *Stones of Venice*, that you may judge for yourself whether it is not advisable to know more of an author who can at least express his thoughts in language at once so nervous and so picturesque.

You must understand, that in order to bring the scene of St. Mark's Place at Venice most vividly before his readers he takes you first to the west front of an English cathedral,

and then passes rapidly to the great Italian church: heightening the lights and deepening the shadows, and brightening the coloured marbles of the latter by contrasting them with the sober tints and uniform grays of the northern stones and the northern climate. “And so we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars, where there were statues once, and where the fragments here and there of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king—perhaps indeed a king on earth—perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven: and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered and gray, and grisly with the heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and coloured on the stony scales by the deep russet orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so higher still to the bleak towers so far above that the eye loses itself amongst the bosses of their tracery, though they are rude and strong, and only sees, like a drift of eddying black points now

closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places amongst the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds, that fill the old square with that ceaseless clangour of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and the sea."

And now study this beautiful word-painting of the art of the sunny south. "We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the Bocca di Piazza, and there we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark's seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones, and on each side the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

"And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great

square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away ; a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light, a treasure-keep, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber, and delicate as ivory — sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm-leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes ; and in the midst of it the solemn forms of angels, sculptured and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones—jaspar and porphyry, and deep green serpentine, spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like. • their

bluest veins to kiss ;' the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as the receding tide leaves the waved sand ; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herb-age, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs all beginning and ending in the cross. And above them in the broad archivolts a continuous chain of language and of life, angels and the signs of heaven, and the labours of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth ; and above these another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers — a confusion of delight — amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's lion lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstacy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

“Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval ! there is a type of

it in the very birds that haunt them; for instead of the restless crowd—hoarse-voiced and sable-winged—drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark's porches are full of doves that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion with the tints hardly less lovely that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years."

Now these are but extracts from one of a series of great works, the greatest yet that have ever appeared on art in the English language. And we shall value style the more highly when we remember that the author undertook to establish principles either forgotten or ignored or despised by the artists and critics of his day; to do battle against the fetish-worship of great names and pretentious authorities; to raise the noble arts of architecture and painting from being the plaything of the wealthy, to be the delight and instruction of all who would educate themselves sufficiently to appreciate their worth; to establish a standard of eternal principles—principles not true because artistic, but artistic because true—against the dogmas of men who ruled in art for the same reason that the one-eyed man was king

amongst the blind. Remembering all this, we shall value the aid of such an ally as style more than ever—an ally which in this case, though at times perhaps too caustic and assuming, has by its own vigour and loveliness attracted many to a class of works which would otherwise have been passed by unopened. What a pleasant address, and a clear enunciation, and musical voice, and genial manners are to a man, that and much more is a good style to composition; and we need no more convincing proof of its puissance than the total revolution in opinion concerning art mainly effected through the instrumentality of the charming writings of this one author.



## X.

### ON ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

**I** PROPOSE in this my last letter on this subject to give illustrations of what are called the ornaments of composition—such as irony, pathos, wit, banter, &c. : the hills and valleys, broken rocks and stately masses in the ordinary and necessarily dead level of composition, whether in history, argument, or oratory. But in reading extracts from speeches, you must recollect that these passages were composed and introduced as spoken, not written compositions; whatever tameness attaches itself to them now is attributable to them in their present form. Picture to yourself any assembly of English gentlemen, any House of Commons—that of the austere Barebones alone excepted—and then imagine the shouts of laughter that must have greeted the birth of the following witty metaphor.

In order fully to enjoy the absurdity of the picture, you must understand that the Earl

of Chatham had just seriously damaged his great reputation for wisdom and lessened his popularity by the acceptance of a peerage ; he was no longer “the great Commoner.” And in order to get a ministry together, he had been reduced to collect them from the most opposite and least likely quarters. Burke was now a rising member in the Opposition, having entered the House comparatively late in life, rich with the thought and study of years, and gifted with that astonishing eloquence which could excite his hearers equally to laughter or to tears—which could enliven by vivid illustrations the most wearisome subjects, and ennoble a debate by founding it upon arguments based on principle, instead of on factious interests.

He has thus immortalised the handiwork of the newly-created Earl of Chatham. “He made an administration so chequered and speckled ; he put together a piece of joinery so crossly indented and so whimsically dovetailed ; a cabinet so variously inlaid ; such a piece of diversified mosaic ; such a tessellated pavement without cement, here a bit of black stone and there a bit of white ; patriots and courtiers ; king’s friends and republicans ; Whigs and Tories ; treacherous friends and

open enemies,—that it was indeed a very curious show, but utterly unsafe to touch and unsure to stand on. The colleagues whom he had assorted at the same boards stared at each other, and were obliged to ask, ‘Sir, your name?’ ‘Sir, you have the advantage of me.’ ‘Mr. Such-a-one, I beg a thousand pardons.’ I venture to say it did so happen that persons had a single office divided between them who had never spoken to each other in their lives until they found themselves, they knew not how, pigging together, heads and points, in the same truckle-bed.”

And now, if you would conceive how deeply the *sæva indignatio* at the perpetration of a shameful faction can stir a generous mind, read this majestic protest against one of the gravest crimes that blackens the pages of the history of England—the employment of Indians in our war against the Americans for their independence; a war which, begun in obstinate infatuation, was conducted with imbecility and concluded with dishonour. The noble lord referred to by the Earl of Chatham is Lord Suffolk, who had defended this disgraceful measure on the ground that it is perfectly allowable

to use “all the means which God and nature have put into our hands;” which sentiment would of course have included a liberal use of poisoned weapons and poisoned wells and food. “My lords,” was the scathing reply of the old orator, “we are called upon as members of this House, as men, as Christians, to protest against such horrible barbarity. ‘That God and nature have put into our hands.’ What ideas of God and nature that noble lord may entertain I know not; but I know that such detestable principles are equally abhorrent to religion and humanity. What! to attribute the sacred sanction of God and nature to the massacres of the Indian’s scalping-knife; to the cannibal savage, torturing, murdering, devouring, drinking the blood of his mangled victims! Such notions shock every precept of morality, every feeling of humanity, every sentiment of honour. These abominable principles, and this more abominable avowal of them, demand the most decisive indignation. I call upon that right reverend and this most learned bench to vindicate the religion of their God, to support the justice of their country; I call upon the honour of your lordships to reverence the dignity of your ancestors and

to maintain your own ; I call upon the spirit and humanity of my country to vindicate the national character."

But of all the ornaments, or rather powers—forces, I should say—of composition, none equal in sustained strength that which Swift used so mightily in all, and especially in his political writings. "The lord of irony, that master-spell," as one poet has described him ; who could "laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy-chair," as another has well pictured him ; to which remark a third added the mournfully true reflection that "it was the soul of Rabelais dwelling in a dry place." Whether the images evoked are simply ludicrous and lively, as in some of his travels, or grave and serious, or grotesque and horrible, the effect is equally irresistible, the blow equally trenchant. In one of his pamphlets on Ireland he disenses at great length and with an unrivalled mock gravity, the propriety of killing and salting down all Irish babies for the English market. Do not omit to notice in this extract (as in all his writings) the transparent clearness and (if I may so call it) the nervous elasticity of his simple Saxon language, so well suited for the expression of that master-spell which Sydney

Smith too, amongst other political writers, well understood how to wield.

The extracts I have chosen are from one of the most powerful of all Swift's works, and the very title of which is too good to be forgotten: "An Argument to prove that the abolishing of Christianity in England may, as things now stand, be attended with some inconvenience, and perhaps not produce those good effects proposed thereby."

"It is likewise urged that there are by computation in this kingdom above ten thousand parsons, whose revenues, added to those of my lords the bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred young gentlemen of wit and pleasure, and freethinking enemies to priestcraft, narrow principles, pedantry and prejudices, who might be an ornament to the court and town; and then, again, so great a number of able-[bodied] divines might be a recruit to our fleet and armies. This, indeed, appears to be a consideration of some weight. But then, on the other side, several things deserve to be considered likewise; as, first, whether it may not be thought necessary that in certain tracts of country, like what we call parishes, there should be one man at least of abilities to read and write. Then it

seems a wrong computation that the revenues of the Church throughout the island would be large enough to maintain two hundred young gentlemen, or even half that number, after the present refined way of living; that is, to allow each of them such a rent as, in the modern form of speech, would make them easy.

“It is again objected, as a very absurd ridiculous custom, that a set of men should be suffered, much less employed and hired, to bawl one day in seven against the lawfulness of those methods most in use towards the pursuit of greatness, riches, or pleasure, which are the constant practice of all men alive. But this objection is, I think, a little unworthy so refined an age as ours. Let us argue this matter calmly. I appeal to the heart of any polite freethinker whether, in the pursuit of gratifying a predominant passion, he hath not always felt a wonderful incitement by reflecting it was a thing forbidden; and therefore we see, in order to cultivate this taste, the wisdom of the nation hath taken special care that the ladies should be furnished with prohibited silks and the men with prohibited wine. And, indeed, it were to be wished that some other prohibi-

tions were promoted in order to improve the pleasures of the town; which, for want of such expedients, begin already, as I am told, to flag and grow languid, giving way daily to cruel inroads from the spleen."

It is rather a singular coincidence that two of the most thrilling and therefore best-known instances of pathos should occur in the speeches of two of the greatest orators in the world—speeches delivered on almost identically the same subjects, and yet at an interval of more than two thousand years; Demosthenes pleading the cause of the unhappy Phocians, Burke that of the miserable inhabitants of the Carnatic, in language almost as touching to read now as when it was composed. But the passage in Burke is well known; for who that has once read can ever forget the crowd of prisoners "enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry;" the "people in beggary—a nation that stretched out its hands for food;" "the fulfilment of their impious vow by Hyder Ali and his yet more ferocious son;" and the climax, where the orator bids his audience figure to themselves an equal extent of "our sweet and cheerful country—from Thames to Trent north and south, and from the Irish to the



German Sea east and west—emptied and embowelled (may God avert the omen of our crimes !) by so accomplished a desolation”?

There is another example of pathos, less oratorical in its language, but still more affecting in its nature, in Burke’s mention of his son, in his memorable reply to the attacks made by the Duke of Bedford and Earl of Lauderdale upon his pension. As an expression of personal grief and desolation it is manly, unostentatious, and yet singularly affecting; never did words convey more vividly how the iron had entered into the soul of a parent. To understand the reason for his seemingly intruding his own private sorrow upon the public, you should read the “Letter to a Noble Lord,” and master the circumstances to which that letter owed its existence: often must the noble lord—and future generations of his family too perhaps—have cursed the spirit of folly which evoked such an annihilating rejoinder. Wit, sarcasm, learning, logic, eloquence, an unequalled *copia verborum*, are ruthlessly devoted to crushing his ill-judging critic: and the memory of his captious assailant is now only preserved to us by the genius of his mighty antagonist.

Long before the year 1779 the rapid increase of the national debt had already caused great uneasiness : in that year it attracted special attention, and public meetings were held in various counties to compel the reduction of our excessive annual expenditure ; the Duke of Richmond in the Upper House, and Burke in the Lower, adverted to the subject ; and in 1780 Burke moved for leave to bring in no less than five bills to abolish useless places and otherwise reduce this preposterous extravagance—an extravagance we are still paying for now, and which many a generation after us will have to bear too. Here again you should read, or rather study, the whole speech ; it is a masterpiece of argument, of thorough acquaintance with and exhaustion of his subject, a storehouse of sound political principles on the subjects of revenue and commerce, and embellished with such graces of style as one would have thought impossible in a speech on so unpoetic a subject as economy and trade.

Amongst other propositions in the bill was the following : that all claimants on the exchequer, including officers of the court and ministers of state, should be arranged in certain classes, and paid according to whatever

class they stood in ; the first before the second, and so on up to the ninth and last : if there was not sufficient money in the exchequer to pay all, the deficit was not to be made good—as had hitherto been done—by forestalling the revenue of the coming year, but the ninth class were to lose their salaries, then the eighth, and so on. Now the classes were arranged according to their utility to the country, and the inability to recover their due on the part of the members of that class : so the judges were placed in the first, the ambassadors in the second, but in the eighth the officers of honour about the king, and in the ninth the premier, the chancellor of the exchequer, and other lords of the treasury : thus—assuming that the vast allowance of the civil list was sufficient—it was just, as well as politic, that the loss should fall on those through whose delinquency it was occasioned. Then follows a most ludicrous picture of the consternation and uproar in the royal household, upon whom the loss would fall immediately after the great minister of the crown, on the arrival of an insolvent quarter.

“ If the failure from the delinquency should be very considerable, it will fall on

the class directly above the first lord of the treasury, as well as upon himself and his board. . . . It will fall upon masters of the horse, upon lord-chamberlains, upon lord-stewards, upon grooms of the stole, and lords of the bedchamber. The household troops form an army who will be ready to mutiny for want of pay, and whose mutiny will be *really* dreadful to a commander-in-chief. A rebellion of the thirteen lords of the bedchamber would be far more terrible to a minister, and would probably affect his power more to the quick, than a revolt of the thirteen colonies. What an uproar such an event would create at court! What petitions and committees and associations would it not produce! Bless me, what a clattering of white sticks and yellow sticks would be about his head; what a storm of gold keys would fly about the ears of the minister; what a shower of Georges and Thistles, and medals, and collars of S.S. would assail him at his first entrance into the antechamber after an insolvent Christmas quarter! A tumult that could not be appeased by all the harmony of the new-year's ode."

I have quoted thus largely out of Burke's speech for two reasons; firstly because of

the excellence and the variety of the style of ornament; and secondly because there is certainly no other single orator from whose works so much is to be learnt of sound practical wisdom in the science of government: it is no mere orator or voluble talker that we have to learn from, but a man gifted with a clear insight into principles, and yet well aware of how far those principles would be practicable in politics; deeply imbued with Solon's wisdom, to know the best laws possible, but propose the best that would be tolerated. Burke, remember, was the one and only man who, as Adam Smith admitted, at once comprehended the total revolution he proposed in political economy, and who, in fact, had in thought anticipated him. Burke was, beyond all doubt, "the best judge of a picture he ever knew," was the assertion of Sir Joshua Reynolds; his knowledge was as various as his genius was profound: a knowledge embracing even one or two handicrafts. If therefore you can acquire vigour and elegance of style simultaneously with an insight into sound political truths, so much the better. Too often with us the jewel is spoilt by the setting; worth marred by tastelessness: here you have, with some exceptions—*huma-*

*num est errare*—the jewel and its setting each in their perfect beauty. It is better, moreover, not to try too much at first : the learner in geology studies a gravel-pit, then a valley, before he tries to trace dislocated strata across a broken country. Few were the authors, but thoroughly read and re-read, from whom Southey learnt his English prose ; and there are few greater masters in English prose writing than Southey. And if you cannot content yourself with Swift and Burke for masters to study with for some time at least, you may perhaps, as a witty Irish priest told an Englishman who ridiculed his belief in Purgatory, “go further and fare worse.”

## XI.

### ON METAPHOR.

**M**ETAPHOR is at once the oldest and the most widely used of all the ornaments of composition in every language, whether of civilised or barbarous nations, and in every form of poetry and prose alike, extending from a single word to a complicated sentence. It is, to a great extent, not so much an ornament of language as a necessary part of language itself—simple ideas necessarily preceding complex. Just as the expression would run, “the savage animal devours with his mouth;” so it is not so much poetical as natural to speak of “the mouth,” not “the edge” of the sword; and a flame as a “devouring” fire, and “tasting” of death, as the old Hebrews did. Again, inasmuch as the natural expression of joy is laughter and song, it is not (as we usually term it) a poetic image, but rather a necessary mode of expressing the simplest ideas,

to speak of the fields standing so thick with corn that they “laugh and sing.” Not that I deny the poetic beauty of metaphor, but as a matter of fact it can easily be shown that in all early literature (which always takes the form of poetry to aid the memory) metaphor was employed, not because it was poetic, but because it was indispensable for the purpose of expressing one’s ideas in intelligible language at all. In later, not in primitive times, it is employed not compulsorily, but voluntarily, to add a vividness and piquancy to words and ideas that would otherwise sound bald and tame.

It is said by those who have studied the subject, that a nation may be known by its proverbs; certainly the bent of a nation’s disposition is at least as clearly marked in the metaphors most in vogue amongst its speakers and writers. The ruling passion with the Athenians—whom we really mean when we talk loosely about “the old Greeks”—was a love of the sea, a craving after and determination to secure and maintain their naval supremacy; and so strongly is this fact marked in their literature, in their use of metaphors alone, that had their history been lost, we could have rightly assumed that a



people who could hardly open its mouth without expressing its ideas in naval imagery must have been very devoted to, and dependent on, the sea. Which in point of fact the Athenians were: their empire lay scattered (like ours) over a crowd of islands and sea-girt promontories; their mines lay beyond the sea; their daily bread came over the sea; they depended on the sea equally for their daily subsistence and their political supremacy. Their city, though originally built inland, they, as it were, dragged down and chained to the sea by their long walls; and every stone of those sea-walls overlooked the bay of Salamis, the scene of such a naval victory to them as those of La Hogue and the Nile and Camperdown and Trafalgar might perhaps be to us rolled into one, or as if we could localise the many various spots where the Spanish Armada suffered, partly from our attacks, but mostly from tempests, and fix that one spot within sight of St. Paul's Cathedral.

It is an *embarras des richesses*, "a sea" of metaphors taken from the sea, which greets you at every step in the Athenian writers. When Medea, in Euripides' greatest drama, wants words to express her utter desolation, she does not merely describe her loneliness,

as Catharine (in *Henry VIII.*) does so movingly,

“Alas, I am a woman friendless, helpless.”

Whose complaint runs thus :

“Nay, forsooth, my friends,  
They that must weigh out my afflictions,  
They that my trust must grow to, live not here ;  
They are, as all my other comforts, far hence  
In mine own country, lords.”

Notice how Medea's language, exactly the same in meaning, differs in metaphor :

“Nor have I  
Or mother's love, brother's, or friend's, wherein  
Safe anchorage to find from these my sorrows.”

And in the next scene, where her banishment is announced to her :

“Most wretched am I, utterly undone :  
My foes crowd every stitch of sail to harm me,  
Nor friendly port appears to save from ruin.”

And when at length gleams of hope do arise upon her clouded horizon, the same metaphor is still sustained :

“For this good man, just where I labour'd most,  
Appears a port of refuge for my plans :  
Here will I bind my hawsers to the shore.”

Nor is it to be thought that this language is peculiar to the character ; in the play of *Her-*

*cules gone mad* the injunction given to Malness runs thus :

“Rouse him to fury, let murder loose full sail.”

So in the *Ædipus at Colonus*, the Chorus bids the man of many sorrows,

“Begone, cast off your moorings from our land.”

And lest this should be thought the more exalted language of tragedy, turn to Aristophanes’ broad comedy, and hear the language, bold and reckless, of the outspoken Athenian populace : the key-note to the whole passage is struck in the use of the word ‘sea ;’ in a natural, not a metaphorical sense at all ; but in a moment the wits of a naval people are set working out naval images. See his *Knights* (l. 432), where in the course of a few lines you have three speakers sharing between them the following metaphors : “ a furious squall of rage and anger,” “ take in reefs,” “ run before the gale,” “ sound the pump,” “ slack away the sheet,” “ a gale of false accusations,” “ let go your clew-lines,” “ the gale’s abating :”—it would be impossible to translate the passage without adding much explanatory matter. Both here and in many another passage in their great comedian you may easily see how largely me-

taphorical language among the Athenians was indebted to the sea and naval affairs: they were seamen to the backbone; and out of the abundance of the heart a nation's mouth speaks, as well as a man's.

Still more decisively is the singularly double character of the other great nation of antiquity sketched in their use of metaphors. To some writers, who have looked only on one side of the Roman character, that great nation has appeared a band of ferocious soldiers, annexing country after country, annihilating all national life, absorbing every people, of whatever language, religion, or race, into one compact uniform body, governed by the same laws which were imposed by the one central power, and administered by one uniform system of government. Those writers, on the other hand, who have looked to their government of their subject provinces, rather than to the means by which they acquired provinces to govern, are astonished at the general success of their system; how wisely and largely they adapted themselves to the circumstances of the different states they had to rule; and yet how perfectly they organised government in all its parts throughout all their

vast empire; its armies less than half of what has been for a century required to keep the same countries now in order; its perfect system of communication from the Grampians to the Euphrates; the freedom of trade throughout their vast dominions; the great works of public utility, whose size and massiveness in a third or fourth-rate town surpass ours in the capitals of the world; one code of laws, civil and criminal, for all the numerous inhabitants of most of Europe, a large tract of the west of Asia, and all Africa that was inhabitable. Organisation, discipline, order, rule, system—this was the mainspring of the Roman life. Neglecting art almost entirely, sciences completely, literature very largely, he devoted himself to the developing this idea of discipline in two branches only; and, as is the case with most men with an idea, he succeeded perfectly. War and law were to him the two objects of life; “*regere imperio populos*,” “*debellare superbos*”—to rule the nation with sovereign sway, to crush all who resist—were his two ideas: is it extraordinary if his ruling passion has been petrified in his language? With Cicero, to resist the temptations of vice is “to declare war against it;” the

final performance of duties is "the having served all your campaigns;" to take a part in an agreement with a fair share of success is "*justo sacramento contendere*," which I think is hardly translatable into English at all. So the ideas which we express by vigour, tone, energy, are in Latin homely and coarse images derived from military training and battle-scenes; "blood," "nerves," "arms," "bones;" the ideas of the recruiting-sergeant predominate.

As regards their other great foible, law, their use of its language for metaphor is even more strongly marked; and though this would appear pedantic to us, it was not so with a nation of lawyers: with them the forms and processes of the law were far more simple than with us, and every educated man understood them perfectly; indeed, for some centuries every Roman gentleman was expected to defend his dependant personally in the law-court: no wonder, then, that literature and speeches should smack of their education; that "to call upon a man to answer for his proceedings" was expressed by "threatening him with an action;" to "agree in your dislike to a man" was to "sign your name to a bill of accusation against

him ;" to attack a man's character violently was to "take an oath in court that you do not accuse him out of malice," and so on : the whole atmosphere of their literature is redolent of pleas, demurrers, witness-boxes, and jurymen. The Romans, too, were great farmers ; consequently this pursuit furnished them with metaphors not a few ; not so many, however, as to make the subject worth dwelling upon. Quotations with reference to their two great characteristics might be made by pages full.

With ourselves our interests are many and various ; so that I do not find that any one national pursuit has given its colour to our common metaphorical language. In no country in Europe is there so complete a blending of different occupations, so little of the supremacy of one profession or employment ; consequently all professions, all trades, business, amusement, games, ancient recollections, modern ideas, all alike contribute to supply the metaphorical language of everyday life. Take manufactures, for example : the whole "machinery" of state worked imperfectly ; the "wheels" of business were clogged ; and finally, "the whole machine broke hopelessly down." Take law : I "de-

murred" to his statement on many grounds ; he died, and the question passed to a higher "tribunal" than man's ; a "trumped-up charge." Take trades : strike while the "iron" is hot ; "cement" an alliance with another nation ; a hope "built" on sure "foundations." From medicine : an "antidote" to the mischief going on ; "sinews of war." Take games : "he played his cards well ;" a "trump ;" a "fine stroke." Ancient customs : "to throw down the gauntlet." Music : "harmonise with ;" "discord ;" "disconcerted." The Scriptures : the real inducement was the "loaves and fishes ;" to "wash your hands" of the whole proceeding.

But with us, as with the ancient Athenians, the salt water has great influence ; to nothing like the same absorbing extent with us as with them ; but yet, great as are our other interests, whether of business or pleasure, I think this is the greatest, and that our many metaphors drawn from the sea prove that such is the case.

Nor is it to be wondered at ; no other scene is equally one of duty and profit and amusement. Our royal navy absorbs scores of boys annually ; our merchant-service more still. Half the paterfamilias in business



look to their six weeks at the sea as the year's one holiday; and yachting is happily a very flourishing institution. Little wonder, then, that Jack has imported his lingo duty-free into our inland regions, and given a smack of the sea to the conversation of very unseamanlike characters indeed. We "sound" a person's intentions, "fathom" the mystery, "drift" helplessly into difficulties; the state is thrown on its "beam-ends," or some great statesman takes the "helm" and "pilots the vessel of the commonwealth into smooth water;" we "run foul" of an adversary; our fortunes are "wrecked;" there was the "rock" they split upon; we "press" all we can into our service, "run" before the gale, or in a difficulty "sail as near the wind" as possible.

Nor are we in bad society in these nautical metaphors. In one of the best-known and most pathetic speeches in any of his plays Shakespeare makes the great Cardinal thus describe his fallen fortunes:

" Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,  
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,  
Found thee a way out of his wreck to rise in,  
A sure and safe one, though thy master missed  
it."

I do not set much store by any rules about the use of metaphors, except against the confusion of them. Hamlet's expression, "to take arms against a sea of troubles," has been condemned as false metaphor; probably unjustly, because to take up arms has become an idiom, and equivalent to the idea of resistance and opposition, so entirely that the original notion of seizing one's sword and shield is wholly lost by lapse of time. A rapid change of metaphor, which is very common in Shakespeare, arising from the exuberance of his poetic fancy, is very beautiful when guided by good taste. I mention the fact because a frigid criticism has condemned such changes, which are in reality to be highly valued; as the art of the architect who can cover a doorway with gorgeous sculpture—men and angels, and trees and flowers, and birds and beasts, figures and medallions, bas-reliefs and high-reliefs—and yet without a sign of oppression or overcrowding the original design. Take, for example,

" The current that with gentle murmur glides,  
Thou knowest, being stopped, impetuously doth  
rage ;  
But when his fair course is not hindered,

He makes sweet music with the enamelled stones,  
 Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge  
 He overtaketh in his pilgrimage."

Here you have four metaphors in three lines. He would be a bold critic who would venture to condemn the abundance of them. The spirit of true ornament is better understood now. If guided by good taste, you cannot have too much, any more than the sun can set in too gorgeous a firmament of many-coloured clouds. It is worth observing how much may be expressed by a single word of metaphor; but then it is a master's hand that has summoned that word into that place. Could any one word express more perfectly the disgust of men disappointed of their expectations from one they had helped to raise than "this ingrate and *cankered* Bolingbroke"?

When Hamlet is determined to solve the question of his uncle's fears, he will not merely watch him through the play, but "I mine eyes will *rivet* on his face."

Horace has been quoted, and rightly, as supplying excellent instances of metaphor, regulated by perfect good taste; and from his example attempts have absurdly been made to draw a stringent rule against the

use of more than three or four words at most in the same metaphor. It would really be as reasonable to confine the prolific fancy of a Shakespeare or a Milton within Horatian limits as it would be to attempt to accommodate an eagle within the exquisite workmanship of the humming-bird's nest. I admire heartily the excellent taste of such metaphors as

“ *Quo fonte derivata clades  
In patriam populumque fluxit ;*”

and

“ *Incedis per ignes  
Suppositos cineri doloso.*”

But because Horace thus—most wisely I doubt not—limited himself, are we to disparage Milton's most lovely lines—

“ or they led the vine  
To *wed* her elm ; she, *spoused*, about him twines  
Her *marriageable arms*, and with her brings  
Her *dower*, the *adopted* clusters, to adorn  
His *barren* leaves ;”

where the metaphor is continued through at least seven words? The truth is, that no rigid rule is applicable. The principle is identical in Horace and all other great poets and composers in all languages. Never protract your metaphor so far as to cause the

least obscurity : this will alone account for the brevity of Horace's metaphors. Of all faults of writing he dreaded obscurity or confusion the most, and naturally trusted himself least where there were the strongest temptations. It is a noticeable proof of the largeness of heart of our great Shakespeare, that so many of his most powerful metaphors are taken from the common events, usages, implements of every-day life : it is another lesson in calling nothing common or unclean, in "finding the soul of good" in things "common," if not "evil."

I will give you a few instances of metaphors from his plays—a treasure-house of metaphor ; and as they are often not understood, I will leave you to puzzle them out for yourself, as there are always good editions of Shakespeare within reach :

"For thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

Then that perfect description of the functions of sleep—

"Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care."

And the singular but most expressive metaphor by which Lady Macbeth expresses the total helplessness of the drunken guards—

“For them  
Will I with wine and wassail so convince,  
That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbeck only.”

Of course an ornament of composition so full of life and power in poetry cannot fail of being as effective in oratory: and there, next to poetry, we find it in full force—often indeed carrying all before it, through the speaker who really understands the use of the weapon he is wielding. If any hit is made in a speech more telling than usual, you may be sure that in six cases out of seven the orator has introduced some well-applied metaphor. Metaphor was an ally as much prized in the Athenian law-courts as at St. Stephen's nowadays. There is a very amusing instance of it in a speech of Demosthenes made in behalf of a gentleman named Ariston, who brought an action for assault and battery against one Conon. Ariston had manifestly been in the army, and he recounted his story to his counsel in military language: how he had been marching down the street, and was attacked in the rear, I believe,—I quote from memory of the speech read long ago—taken in the flank, squashed in the *mêlée*—and so on; all which expressions Demosthenes stored

up, and reproduced in court to the vast amusement of the jury.

One of the best instances of metaphor—and this we may notice for the advantage of believers in the Horatian maxim—extending through several pages, is to be found in Burke's great speech on economical reform: "I speak, sir, of the board of trade and plantations. This board is a sort of temperate bed of influence; a sort of gently ripening hot-house, where eight members of parliament receive salaries of a thousand a year for a certain given time for doing little, in order to mature at a proper season a claim to two thousand, to be granted for doing less, and on the credit of having toiled so long in that inferior laborious department. . . . This board, sir, had both its original formation and its regeneration in a job. In a job it was conceived, and in a job its mother brought it forth. . . . It was projected in the year 1688, and it continued in a tottering and rickety childhood for about three or four years,—for it died in the year 1693, a babe of as little hopes as ever swelled the bills of mortality in the article of convulsed or overlaid children, who have hardly stepped over the threshold of life. In the year 1696

the court called into life this board of trade which had slept since 1693." Notice now how the same metaphor is felicitously carried on to its children. . . . "Two colonies alone owe their origin to that board. Georgia . . . that colony has cost the nation very great sums of money. Whereas, the colonies which have had the fortune of not being godfathered by the board of trade never cost the nation a shilling, except what has been so properly spent in losing them. But the colony of Georgia, weak as it was, carried with it to its last hour, and carries even in its present pallid visage, the perfect resemblance of its parents. . . . The province of Nova Scotia was the youngest and the favourite child of the board. Good God! what sums the nursing of that ill-thriving, hard-visaged, and ill-favoured brat has cost to this wittol nation!"

I have now told you something of the origin of metaphor in different languages, and of its employment by the best authors; false metaphor, or the joining forcibly two disconnected and dissimilar images, is so palpable a fault, that there is the less need of enlarging on it. I will only, in conclu-



sion, remind you that in proportion as metaphor is powerful, so is care required in the use of it. A skilful workman will carve an infinity of scenery and figures lovely, ludicrous, pathetic, or grotesque, with half-a-dozen gouges and chisels; while the careless or ignorant will but cut his fingers, and quarrel with his tool-chest.

## XII.

### HOW TO MAKE HISTORY INTERESTING?

**H**OW is one to make history interesting? I have mentioned in another essay how much history is to be found contained within the small limits of a county map. Did it ever occur to you that in your rides round your own homes you are often treading on ground whose history would at the same time much increase the interest of your ride and add not a little, at the same time, to your knowledge of days and men gone by?

It is one of the great privileges of an old country that its soil abounds in reminiscences. No small number of the country houses we flit by on the railroad are connected with names of lasting interest; while some buildings, such as Westminster Abbey above all, and to a certain degree all our larger cathedrals, can each "unfold a tale" we should be glad enough to know. Nothing strikes

an educated American more forcibly in this country than its numerous historical associations. He speaks of the sacred ground of Runnymede, and Stratford Church, and Chalgrove Field, and the transepts of Westminster, in language which appears to us little less than strained and affected, though certainly the blame lies with those with whom "familiarity has bred contempt."

You would be surprised if you noticed the amount of history of our own country—and that I assume must have some considerable interest for an Englishman—that lies close at our doors. We are at this spot within an easy day's excursion of a castle which is almost unique in England, combining a perfect Roman and perfect Norman fortress in one; a ruined abbey, whose want of history is fully compensated by its singular beauty and the perfect history it gives of its own building in its own architecture; of another once much grander monastery, now unhappily almost a complete wreck, but where you still are shown the tower in which the heroic Margaret of Anjou took sanctuary in the troublous wars of the Roses, where the ill-advised Perkin Warbeck fled for the same security about thirty

years later, and where you may still see the moat and walls with which the first noble owner of it fortified himself against the French privateers who swarmed over these seas in those times, and whose incursions were checked by some half-dozen forts still extant as a proof of the care of the eighth Henry for the honour of his country. And this brings us to another spot of interest hard by—to the scene of the great naval battle in Henry VIII.'s reign, so well described by Froude, which the king viewed from the mainland; and of the landing which the French effected close by, to their own speedy discomfiture—their last serious landing on English soil. Within a few miles of us rise the walls of a town which saw the fifth Henry's gallant fleet depart for Agincourt, and the yearly arrival of the rich argosies from Venice with the prized stores of eastern spices and goods unknown, except through them, in the English markets; and omitting historical studies of less importance, we can stand at the very place in the street where the murderer Felton struck down the then first subject in England, Charles the First's favourite minister, almost before the eyes of his wife. We can visit the two prisons last occupied

by the unhappy Charles before his death; and after seeing the window he tried to escape through in the one, we are not so much surprised at the other lonely fortress in which he passed so many solitary months, that dreary sea-girt promontory, where he must have indeed felt that he "who enters here leaves hope behind."

Now, the scenes of these historical events are contained within so small a space of country, that we in the centre are nowhere more than twelve miles distant from any scene that I have mentioned to you. But you will tell me that we are situated here on very "classic soil" indeed. I shall be much surprised if any one of your homes is upon ground of less historic interest. Let us see; I will take any one at haphazard.

You have within easy distance of your home one field of battle—a great decisive battle too—in Alfred's days; some curious British antiquities immortalised in one of Scott's most tragic novels; and the mansion of a noble family, singular from the cause of its erection in so lonely a situation, the great plague, one of "our homes of ancient peace;" another, the delight of the antiquarian, the terror of the superstitious neighbourhood; two battle-

scenes of the civil wars between king and parliament. Your country is bisected by a Roman road, underlaid by Roman pavements, piled up with earth-works perhaps older still: as every where almost in our little island we have a tangible history of three or four conquests, and many an epoch of war and peace besides, within, at furthest, an easy drive of our own firesides.

It would be mere repetition to select any other centres, though many I could name: the neighbourhood, for instance, of York, Winchester, Stamford, Bristol, Windsor, would be found to own far higher claims to the title of classic ground than either of the centres I have chosen. You will be satisfied by these two examples that there is plenty to be seen; plenty of the liveliest interest to us who boast that we live as much in the past as in the present; plenty of interest to a people the titles of whose magistrates and officers have remained unchanged for near upon 1000 years, whose counties and parishes embrace the same limits they did when Domesday Book was made, whose government is but a gradual development of principles of liberty conceived and carried out at least a century in advance of any

other nation in Europe; where architecture reached its perfection in the fourteenth century, and whose House of Commons was a formidable power in the State in the fifteenth;

“A land of settled government—

A land of just and old renown,

Where freedom slowly broadens down

From precedent to precedent.”

### XIII.

#### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SIMILE AND METAPHOR?

“**I**N a simile, the two subjects are kept distinct in the expression as well as in the thought; in a metaphor the two subjects are kept distinct in the thought only, not in the expression,” is the definition that has been proposed of the difference between the two. Like many definitions, it is not a particularly exact one, and will be best supplemented by laying before you various examples of either figure.

And first you will observe that, as a rule, similes are found only in poetry, metaphors in prose and poetry alike; and of the various kinds of prose most of all in oratory, the orator being next of kin to the poet. And, indeed, a first-rate orator often displays far more poetry than a third-rate poet. Again, we must not confuse simile with allegory or parable: the latter is a perfect tale complete in itself, dependent solely upon the imagina-



tion of the reader to supply its key ; whereas a simile makes little or no demand upon our imagination—from the outset its counterpart is openly announced, and all that is required of the reader is to judge of the fitness of the comparison. In saying that similes are peculiar to poetry, I do not mean that they are never employed in prose ; generally not more than a dozen or twenty words in length, but sparingly, so that you may read a good deal of excellent English prose and never find one ; there is one known exception in one of those two whom S. T. Coleridge considers one of the four great English prose writers ; and his similes are so beautiful that I will extract one before we pass on to consider their place in poetry. In his *Holy Dying* Jeremy Taylor is speaking of considerations preparatory to death, and reminding us how great is the change between “the sprightfulness of youth and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness of five-and-twenty to the hollowness and dead paleness, the loathsomeness of a three-days’ burial.” To illustrate this thought he continues : “but so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of his hood ; and at first it was fair as the morning, and

full with the dew of heaven as a lamb's fleece; but when a rude breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head and broke its stalk; and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces."

You must have noticed similes of all kinds, some of them of equal beauty and force, in the great classical authors. Homer goes so far as to illustrate the hosts of the Greeks arming for battle by five different similes in immediate succession to one another. Virgil has many, and some singularly apposite similes, expressed in language equally nervous and dignified. You may learn too, incidentally, a good deal of the genius of a poet by his similes. Whereas Homer's are almost always from natural objects—the crane, the horse, the lion, and boar, or the grander scenes of nature, the undulating corn-field, the blazing forest, the heaving ocean,—Virgil not only seeks his (as all poets must) from natural objects, but presses also into his service city scenes, as the turbulent populace

and the commanding orator ; nor does he disdain the merry children's play around the whirling top.

To say that simile and metaphor are two of the purest ornaments of poetry, is to assume that Shakespeare gives us instances innumerable of the happiest application of them : in the mouths of some of his characters the exuberance is perfectly startling : take, for instance, a speech of Ulysses, "from whose mouth words flowed sweeter than honey," in the third act of *Troilus* ; it is the speech beginning "Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back." He starts with a very bold figure of speech, allegorical rather than metaphorical, in which Time is personified with "wallet crammed with alms for oblivion : " no sooner is this figure ended than a simile is introduced, in which retirement from the eyes of men is compared to a mail-coat hung over the grave of a dead warrior : then metaphor upon metaphor succeeds, almost every one bringing forth a fresh one, followed by two more similes in which the rush of claimants for popular applause is compared to the rising tide, and the retired favourite is represented as a foundered horse left as pavement for the abject rear. Then "Time

is like a fashionable host :” then follows a marvellous richness of metaphors, numerous enough to have supplied a second-rate dramatist for an act, instead of lavishing them upon a single speech.

By this speech of Ulysses alone, you can well judge of the power of simile in the hands of a master ; but these were all very short—too short for beauty—but well suited to the situation ; the “many-counselled” chief trying to carry away the resentful warrior in his torrent of impetuous eloquence. Where, however, the occasion is not so pressing, and there is suitable time and opportunity for a more deliberate speech, see how well Shakespeare can prolong a simile through half a speech of forty lines, and yet not wear it threadbare. In *Henry V.* act i. he compares a well-ordered state to the kingdom of the honey-bees, dilating upon their officers, merchants, soldiers, emperor, mechanics, porters, the sad-eyed justice, the pale executor ; and far from feeling overburdened by this lengthened simile, we readily greet no less than four more in the next few lines :—the arrows meeting in one mark—the roads in one town—the streams in one sea—the lines in one dial. You will find in *Henry VIII.*

act iii. scene 2, a good illustration of simile and metaphor combined, where Wolsey laments his past ambition in lines of the deepest pathos; the lines are in the speech beginning "So, farewell to the little good you bear me." In one line he introduces and completes the simile in which he compares himself to "little wanton boys that swim on bladders:" all the rest is metaphor; "the sea of glory, beyond my depth;" "the breaking of the high-blown pride;" "the mercy of the rude stream that must for ever hide me."

Knowing, as we do, Milton's tastes—his love for music, his vast learning, biblical and classical, his great experiences in the world, his love of travel, and the deep harmony between his mind and the book of nature—we are the less astonished at finding a great variety and wealth of similes in his poems: you would be surprised to see how soon the list mounts up, if you made one under the different heads of classical, natural, and biblical subjects. Of the first you will find a capital instance in book ii. line 520, *Paradise Lost*:

"As at the Olympian games or Pythian fields,  
Part curb their fiery steeds, or shun the goal  
With rapid wings, or fronted brigads form."

And in the line immediately following you will see a manifest recollection of Virgil's

“*Armorum sonitum toto Germania cœlo  
Audiit,*”

expanded into

“*As when to warn proud cities war appears  
Waged in the troubled sky, and armies rush  
To battle in the clouds, before each van  
Prick forth the æry heights, and crush their spears,  
Till thickest legions close.*”

In his similes taken from nature, where not directly copied from Homer or some other classic, you will find a vast preponderance of images derived either from astronomy or navigation, either the skies or the sea. For the former we can easily account; his visit to the learned Galileo had made an ineffaceable impression upon his youthful memory. To explain the latter, we must have recourse to the innate admiration of all our island race for the sea, and the particular sympathy which it has excited in the hearts of our most passionate poets. Milton actually records his visit to the great Italian astronomer in *Paradise Lost*, book i. line 285, where he compares Satan's shield to

“the moon, whose orb  
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views

At evening, from the top of Pesolô  
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
Rivers, or mountains, in his spotty globe."

Another example you will find in book ii.  
line 710 :

"Satan stood  
Unterrified, and like a comet burned,  
That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge  
In the arctic sky, and from his horrid hair  
Shakes pestilence and war."

Among his similes from the sea you will observe Satan floating on the burning lake compared, in book i. line 200, to

"Leviathan, whom God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim the northern stream ;  
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,  
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind  
Moors by his side, under the lee, while night  
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays."

Where you will recognise another version of that delicious tale of our boyhood, the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor.

It is not merely the sea that Milton delights in—"the barren sea," as Homer calls it—but the human interest connected with it; perhaps in fond recollection of his lost Lycidas, Milton so often connects the sailor's

hopes and cares and fears with the glorious element he makes his home upon.

In book ii. line 285, the murmur of the assembly is

“As when hollow rocks retain  
The sound of blustering winds, which all night long  
Had roused the sea, now with hoarse cadence lull  
Seafaring men o'erwatch'd, where bark by chance  
Or pinnace anchors in a craggy bay  
After the tempest.”

In book v. line 261, you have similes from both the sky and sea successively :

“As when by night the glass  
Of Galileo, less assured, observes  
Imagin'd lands and regions in the moon ;  
Or pilot from amid the Cyclades,  
Delos or Samos first appearing, kens  
A cloudy spot.”

I could quote you many more examples ; but, if you are interested in the subject, you can readily find them for yourself ; and if you are not, it would be mere waste of time and space to continue a proof already concluded. I will only finally point out to you what a halo of poetry Milton threw round what were modern scientific discoveries in his days, showing that modern science, instead of diminishing, enlarges the field of poetry almost illimitably. In describing the



uniform and yet silent growth of the vast hall of Pandemonium, in book i. line 709, he paints it most vividly by the comparison,

“As in an organ, from one blast of wind  
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.”

And in book iv. line 814, he makes his reader realise the effect of the touch of Ithuriel's spear upon the fallen angel:

“As when a spark  
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, laid  
Fit for the tun, some magazine to store  
Against a rumour'd war, the smutty grain,  
With sudden blaze diffused, inflames the air,—  
So started up in his own shape the fiend.”

If you would care to investigate further the effect of modern scientific discovery on poetry, read by all means the eloquent and majestic peroration (I must call it, rather than conclusion) of Professor Tyndal's book on “Heat;” and if you would see how the Professor's belief has already been carried out into practice, you will find instances *passim* in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

I have drawn so many illustrations from our greatest, that there is less need to seek for fresh ones from our well-filled ranks of minor poets: you will, as a rule, find the use of similes a good test of the author's

study of, and also of your own appreciation of and delight in natural scenes and objects. We might assume, *à priori*, that Pope and his school knew little enough of the realities of nature from their weak, paltry, and untrue descriptions of it, from their similes borrowed secondhand from greater poets, and so villanously tampered with that you might think they were not describing the works of nature, but of one of "nature's journeymen." But with a healthier school a truer style reappears; and from the days of Cowper, Burns, and Goldsmith, to Wordsworth and Tennyson, there have never been wanting men who penetrated within the sanctuary of nature, and preached aloud the glorious lessons therein learnt, on the temple steps, to the multitude outside. In Burns we meet again the same prodigality of similes so noticeable in Shakespeare, and so impossible with any but poetic genius of almost the highest order. To make us realise the fleeting character of Tam O'Shanter's midnight revelry he tells us:

"But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, the bloom is shed;  
Or like the snow falls in the river,  
A moment white, then melts for ever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;

Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm."

Hardly ever was a more perfect poetic image conceived than that of the instantaneous extinguishing of evanescent loveliness, the snow crystals in the river—unless Burns's own simile of sorrow deepening with time be better still :

"Time but the impression deeper makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear."

And to remind you that Burns's spirit and poetic insight is not extinct yet, I give one more extract ; and it is a worthy conclusion to my subject. We began with Shakespeare's similes ; and Shakespeare himself could not have imagined one more true, or expressed in language more sublime than this. Though some years have passed now, you can recollect the shock that came so suddenly that, though other national events of that date will be forgotten, it will be recalled when you are old, the fearful avalanche of woe which fell upon her,

"Over all whose realms to their last isle,  
Commingled with the gloom of imminent war,  
The shadow of his loss moved like eclipse,  
Darkening the world."

#### XIV.

#### ON TENNYSON.

YOU tell me that, though you much wish it were otherwise, you cannot make out what Tennyson means in many of his shorter poems, let alone the longer ones. I must honestly reply that I am not altogether surprised at your difficulties; but would, at the same time, beg you to ask yourself whether a great poet, a philosopher who writes for men, can possibly be comprehended by any one at the mature age of eighteen. You would smile if I asked you for a correct analysis of a church of Michael Angelo, an allegory of Albert Dürer, or a sonata of Beethoven; and yet music and sculpture and drawing are the universal language of all civilised nations. The real fact is, in order to understand a great work, in whatever material its mighty thoughts may be enshrined, you need either special training or

the experience of some years of life acting upon a naturally sensitive imagination. If you want poetry that you can comprehend at a glance, I can refer you to plenty, and that by most voluminous writers. The large school represented by Dr. Watts and Mrs. Hemans will never draw upon you for much thought or study, but it will hardly supply you with more than superficial entertainment. If you would draw living water from the wells of Shakespeare or Wordsworth or Tennyson, you must not complain if the wells are deep.

But there are mere surface difficulties in Tennyson, which a few words of explanation will remove. His poems, you may have noticed, are cast in a mould mainly lyrical and descriptive; but beneath this outward appearance you will observe, on closer inspection, a form essentially dramatic. *Locksley Hall* is purely unintelligible, except as a dramatic composition disguised in epic form. Once observe this peculiarity of the poet, and many a difficulty will straightway vanish: the ice that lies crusted over the depths beneath is every where more or less transparent; and they are real depths beneath, full, some of them, of truths profound and

awful—lessons on which we may well ponder in the spirit the poet thus describes :

“How pure in heart and sound in head,  
With what divine affections bold,  
Must be the man whose thoughts would hold  
An hour’s communion with the dead.”

Turn to the *Vision of Sin*, and see such a lesson. First read it through, and you will probably understand next to nothing of it. But notice its composition : it is in five parts. Examine the metres ; there are three : the first, the third, and the fifth parts are in the same, the ordinary ten-syllable — “Pope’s metre,” as it is called ; the second part begins with the same, but soon changes into an irregular lyric metre, where the rhythm of each line is in great measure dependent on the ideas which are to be conveyed in it ; the fourth part is in short metre, in quatrains, the alternate lines carefully rhymed. The poet calls his poem “a vision ;” and there is, no doubt, an additional obscurity in the allegory of most of it, especially when contrasted with the dreadful realism of the fourth part. He sees a youth riding towards a palace-gate ; his horse has wings, for it represents his soul winged with buoyant hope and noble aspirations ; but the heavy

rider—the evil passions of sense and sensuality—keep him down. From the palace comes a child of sin: at once he follows her, without an effort to shun the danger. The rising of the fountain they await is the return of satiated appetite; their dreamy, listless, worthless existence is well pictured in the simile,

“As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse,  
Dreams over lakes and lawns and isles and capes.”

And now you must pause for a minute, and remember the extreme difficulty of the subject the poet has proposed to himself: he has to publish that which will not bear publicity; the prophet must uplift his voice against sin, and yet not offend the delicacy of modesty, nor even the fastidiousness of refinement. And if you will now carefully read the second part, you will, I think, be equally charmed and surprised at the skill with which this task is accomplished.

Notice particularly the aid the poet brings from metre. Strict lyric metres are essentially passionate. Here the lines wonderfully express the passion of voluptuousness; yet there is not an image that disgusts, not a thought that could insult the most

delicate sensitiveness. Nor is it a mere word-picture—indistinct, and therefore unreal: the all-absorbing power of passion, the absolute slavery and degradation of its victim, the total loss of self-respect, and forgetfulness of all duty, are portrayed in a gorgeousness of language unparalleled elsewhere, I think, even in Tennyson's poetry.

And now, in the third part, we return to the metre of the first again; and let me, in passing, call your attention to the fact that there is a great difference in the rhythm of the lines between this and Pope's metre: with him, and usually, the sense concludes with the rhyme; here, as in Keats' *Endymion*, the sense runs as it were athwart the rhyme, concluding often in the middle of a line, as blank-verse does: thereby is added some of the dignity of blank-verse to the natural richness of rhyme; for truths noble and solemn demand a noble metre and solemn language: diamonds should not be set in any other than the purest gold.

And now the poet's "vision" closes on the scene of luxury and sensuality, and the degradation of all that is good and true in man, and opens on the grand daily operations of nature as they march stately on



their course, unmoved by man's sin and folly, bearing silent witness, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, to a spirit of majesty and purity and might, and to scenes of glory of which even they in all their magnificence are but a type. Every morning ("day by day we magnify Thee") God shows his awfulness to man in the rosy flames of dawn, by the profligate and the reveller unheeded; and then from those same heights whence comes the daily witness of God's presence and majesty descends also daily nearer the cold, hueless, formless vapour of death, and that too moves on unheeded by the besotted reveller. And here do not fail to mark a touch of nature seemingly thrown in by accident, but which materially deepens the impression of a terrible reality. The poet struggles, as men do in dreams, to speak and warn the madman; but, as in dreams, he cannot: "no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him."

And now the scene of the vision is again changed. The youth who had ridden the horse with wings, and so entered the gates of the palace of pleasure and sin, leaves the gates a gray and gap-toothed man, as lean as

death; what he had become in character he tells us himself in the fourth part of the poem. The metre changes again, following always the current of the ideas. The youth has passed through the fullest gratification of every sensual passion into a cruel and intense misanthropy: he needs the sharp, short decision of the metre to express his bitter *bons-mots*, his gibes and sneers at all that is lofty and noble, and he avails himself of the advantages of the metre to the full; scorn and insult to the servants who come out to take his horse and lead its master into the inn, sneers at all the world in turn, at name and fame and friendship, at virtue, at patriotism, at freedom and tyranny alike; not a gibe without some truth in it, and yet in all of them the perverted truth, which is the worst lie of all. There is ability, plenty of it, a sad perversion of the intellect, in the old man's mockery and scoffing; he has widely observed mankind, both as individuals and as nations, and believes, or rather says he believes, the sum of all to be, that

“ Every heart, when sifted well,  
Is a clot of warmer dust,  
Mixed with cunning sparks of hell.”

To show you how the true meaning of this

poem has been misunderstood, I may mention that I have seen extracts made from this old cynic's soliloquies and set to four-part music (and very good music too) as a drinking song.

You have now the key to the whole of the fourth part. I need not analyse at length individual passages in it; you can see and weigh well enough for yourself the epicurean refrain of the song, "Fill the cup and fill the can," &c., the gradual passage from mockery to coarseness, and the revelling in all that is loathsome; the sneers at the hopes of youth; an attitude towards Death at once defiant and reckless; and when you have noted all this, do not leave it without reflecting that this is no fancy picture, neither is it a sermon written to adapt itself to a text; it is a lesson clad in language of undying strength and beauty, taught by a layman, one of the most gifted and deeply thoughtful men of our age, who warns us here how a life of self-indulgence must end in an old age of bitter misanthropy and selfish disbelief in all that is good. Nor is it merely the *vice* of the old man that is so appalling; it is even more his *ignorance* of all the better part of man. The whole vast world of truth and honour, gene-

rosity and purity, is to him inconceivable—he never moved in it; and thinking that his own little circle of sin and self-indulgence is “the world,” he scoffs at all beyond that circle as impossible or hypocritical. This is a useful lesson to the so-called wisdom of men of the world, as they are termed, the “Sir Mulberry Hawkes” of society: their knowledge is no doubt very perfect as far as it goes, but how far is that? to the purlieus of riot and gambling and vice, and what they impudently call “the world.” What can such as they, what could this aged voluptuary here, understand of the spirit that animated the crew and soldiers of the Birkenhead, who put the women and children into the boats, and themselves sank into the cruel South Atlantic waves, swarming with sharks, each man standing in his rank as calmly as on parade? Conceive the impertinence and ignorance of a man who tells us with a sneer that virtue, friendship, honour, love of country, are but hollow mockeries, while we see a Garibaldi winning a whole country in the field, and then contentedly retiring to his little island farm; while not a week passes without its history of generous (often fatal) self-exposure to

rescue the drowning from a wreck or the suffocating from a mine. These, remember, are your "men of the world," who ask us to believe this misanthropic trash. You have heard perhaps of the beetle who, as he crawled across the pavement of St. Paul's, sententiously remarked, "No, he could not at all approve of the architecture of the building, there were far too many cracks in the pavement, and his legs fell into them." Your ancient *roué* takes about as extended a view of life, and the mixture of good and evil of which that life is compounded. Would you have sounder, juster, truer views of life? Survey rather a wider horizon than that which limited this old man's view. Would you possess a judgment unpoisoned, and a mental vision undistorted? then live purely in youth. The old misanthrope did but reap in his old age the fruits of that which he had sown in his youth; it could not be otherwise.

There is a stately grandeur in the conclusion of the poem; the metre again abruptly changes with the sense, the last faint echoes of mockery die away as the mountain range again appears before us; this time Death is at work with its subtle chemistry, producing

lower life out of the dissolution of nobler things ; while through the air, above all this decay, ring the questions which every thoughtful man must often have asked himself in vain. The Saviour's great command, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," has lost happily none of its ancient force yet. First mercy pleads, "It was a crime of sense, mere sensual indulgence ; it brought its own punishment, for it faded and perished as time fled on ; surely he suffered in this world enough in losing that for which alone he lived." The reply is obvious, "The crime is more than you think, not of sense merely ; it was that originally, but grew to be one of malice, —a crime of the will, not one of the mere passions." To this again the rejoinder comes, subtler but not less true ; it admits the truth of the accusation, but pleads extenuating circumstances : "After all, some sparks of life are left ; are they to be quenched ? His very bitterness and cynicism prove the existence of some grain of conscience left smouldering below." Fain would we know what lies "behind the veil ;" often would our curiosity, or a nobler feeling of inquiry into the world beyond, demand "is there any hope ?" But still the reply comes (happily,

no doubt, for us), understood by none. But we have still the Father's works to contemplate; still many a lesson to learn from the rain which falls equally on the good and bad alike, the life which is given to all to use or misuse as they will; still, above the vice and riot of our luxurious cities, above too the questionings of the philosopher, the self-tormenting spirit of modern inquiry,

“On the glimmering limit far withdrawn  
God makes Himself an awful rose of dawn.”

XV.

WHAT'S THE USE OF SHAKESPEARE?

YOU mentioned the other day that you did not see what practical use there was in Shakespeare. Of course a good deal must depend upon the very ambiguous term *use*. We should probably attach quite different meanings; but I will suppose that you mean to value his plays, not merely by the low standard of how much money or money's worth can be made out of the study of his works, but what lessons he gives us for the practical life of this practical age.

First, I must protest against this as a test of more than a very small part of Shakespeare's worth; and then, with this protest entered, I will take him at your standard, and show you, I think, one very important lesson on the spot. You remember our laughing very heartily at an account of the hustings performances—speech there was none—of a poor young gentleman brought



forward at the last general election to represent a southern county? How one of an unsympathising audience cruelly remarked "that he 'ad more in his 'at" (viz. his written speech), "than he 'ad in his 'cad:" how, on his declaring with perfect truth that he could not speak, they good-naturedly rejoined, "Give us a song then, governor." Well, what was very funny to us was equally distressing to him and his friends. You may perhaps be on the same hustings in a few years' time. I hope you may never be in his humiliating position. Let us see if Shakespeare can help to save you from attaining to "such bad eminence" as this unhappy candidate found it. Now it so happens that Shakespeare, who has given us several masterpieces of debate, has given us at least two hustings speeches: one as bad as a man of any note could make; the other, the reply, as excellent as it was successful; and I will venture to assert that any man who could apply the *principles* on which Mark Antony framed his speech to the mob, would be able to carry a large portion of his hearers with him, even in the teeth of their own convictions. The two speeches are in *Julius Cæsar*, the second act and first scene. Both are to

the same crowd; but Brutus has this great advantage, that he addresses a not unsympathising audience. The deepest-rooted of any of the baser feelings of our nature is envy; and to say that Cæsar was great—great in almost any sense of the word—is to say that he was largely envied. Antony had a very up-hill game to play. As we are to regard this from a strictly practical point of view, I shall do no more than notice the literary distinction Shakespeare has made between the prose of Brutus and the poetry of Antony. It could not have been written otherwise with truth; but that we must not dwell upon now, only I must beg you to notice that poetry itself has more to do with practical life than you think of. There was no prose, except the absence of metre, about the noblest passages of the speeches of Fox, the two Pitts, Sheridan, and Burke. As you have to learn rather than unlearn, we will not dwell long on Brutus's speech. Read it through, and then ask yourselves if ever mortal man was influenced by such a hodge-podge of cold, lifeless antitheses. One would think it was a pedantic rhetorician, not a statesman, speaking, or rather weighing out his miserable word-clauses ounce by

ounce. "Hear me for my cause," he says. Now for something neat and pretty, and very nice to match that, antithetical if possible. "Be silent that you may hear." To criticise one sentence is to criticise all. Was ever human heart aroused by such heartless stuff? Look on a few lines, the same silly rhetorical prettinesses. "Cæsar lives—you are slaves; Cæsar dies—you are free men;" the strained climax, "As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him." And so on with the same dreary commonplaces to the end. But poor as the speech is, he has a potent ally in the vulgar hatred of tyranny amongst a mob who have not brains enough to see that the days of senatorial tyranny and misgovernment were ended, that an autocratic tyranny there must be—if not of the great and wise, then of the man of narrow heart and feeble brain.

And now let us picture the scene in our imagination. Antony ascends the rostra, *i.e.* the hustings; around him a boisterous sea of faces, each in his own way more or less violently expressive of hopes and feelings the very opposite of the orator's. The few articu-

late words that are heard above the general uproar are to the effect that Cæsar was a tyrant, and "we are bless'd that Rome is rid of him," and "'twere best he speak no harm of Brutus here." Yet, if you look on to the next street-scene, these same ardent partisans of Brutus and haters of Cæsar are tearing the conspirators to shreds, and building up a funeral pile for the body of the great emperor. Never did orator ascend hustings with the chances more seriously against, not only his success, but his own personal safety; never did orator descend more superlatively victorious. What wrought this marvellous change? When Pitt was on a visit to Paris during the short peace of 1783, he was asked by some French statesman, "How can a man like Fox, a man of pleasure, ruined by the dice-box and the turf, have such weight with you in England?" He replied, "You have never been under the wand of the magician." And yet Antony's secret is no profound one, though profoundly hidden from statesmen and orators of the Brutus school. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Appeal to men's feelings, the massive deep-laid foundation of all sympathy between us all. Antony appeals in turn to their appre-

ciation of friendship, their sense of pity, their curiosity (a very potent spell with all, especially the uneducated), their gratitude, their military pride, their hatred of ingratitude; and finally he carries their feelings away by the mute eloquence of the visible,—Caesar's rent mantle and bleeding wounds, exciting to the highest pitch all the feelings previously appealed to, on the principle well embodied in the well-known Horatian lines :

“*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*”

It is but the few who can appreciate choice language, apt illustration, delicate satire, gorgeous metaphor, and the other graces of oratory, which must be acquired to enable you to address with weight an educated audience; but the merest mob—and I am speaking of a hustings address to a mob—can appreciate what they see. The warmest hearts and most ardent feelings are as often found under fustian as under broad-cloth; any ordinary crowd can and will heartily love and honour friendship expressed even for an enemy; they can and will pity the fallen, respect gratitude, and hate the ungrateful, even if he has benefited them; for

there is a strong rough sense of justice and honour to which one never appeals wholly in vain.

Antony's task is twofold ; for he has first to disarm the mob of their anger against Cæsar, to disabuse them of their admiration of Brutus's conduct, and secondly to arouse them (if possible) to expel the conspirators bodily from Rome, and leave the coast clear for the operations of his, the Cæsarean party. Notice the extreme caution of the opening words: "I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him;" he disarms their resentment by disclaiming all idea of a formal funeral laudatory oration. Notice the subtle suggestion in the seventh line of the possibility of Brutus being mistaken about Cæsar's ambition: "*If* it were so, it were a grievous fault." He does not venture at first to do more than suggest the possibility of error on Brutus's part, but leaves the oily suggestion to do its work, merely reminding them that Cæsar had grievously paid for it, if Brutus and the other honourable men were right. But in the thirteenth line of his speech he strikes a chord which he knows will ring deep and true through the hearts of the people: "He was my friend ; faithful and just to me." I

at least, as a private man, may and will say so much. He may have been ambitious or not, but he was my friend—faithful and just; *that* you can appreciate and honour even in a tyrant.

And they did appreciate the feeling, and listened quietly while the cunning orator cautiously began “*spargere voces in vulgum ambiguas*,” and suggest that it was no ambition to fill the “*general*” coffers, to weep when the “poor have cried;” to “thrice refuse the kingly crown;” closing his statement by the prudent disclaimer of disproving Brutus’s words, but basing his assertions on the inexorable logic of facts: “I do speak what I do know.” The nail is driven well home. He sees the crowd moved by his eloquence; one more blow, and Brutus’s work will be undone. The crowd, never tolerant of the praise of others, are getting well nauseated by the continued repetition of the honourable character of Brutus and the rest, as contrasted with the facts which Antony “did know.” Once excite their feelings, their reason is more than half convinced, and all is gained. He carries them back to past days—days which none can think of without emotion. “You all

did love him once," then why not mourn at least for him now? I do not ask you for more: with broken voice the skilful orator stammers through the next two lines, and then stops, overpowered by his feelings:

" Si vis me flere, dolendum est  
Primum ipsi tibi,"

The crowd is evidently moved, but still uncertain; however, their former belief in Brutus's infallibility is wrecked: "If thou consider rightly of the matter, Cæsar has had great wrong;" "If it be found so, some will dear abide it;" all point to which way the wind is setting: Antony has secured their feelings, and his game is safe. But yet he needs caution; the very anxiety that the crowd show to listen proves that though they have lost faith in Brutus, they are not yet converted to Antony. Notice, then, with what consummate skill the orator excites first their pity—picturing Cæsar yesterday so great, to-day so low. Widely spread as envy is, pity is—at least amongst all minds but the basest—as deeply planted. Notice the wise introduction of the idea of mutiny in a conditional sentence, as before he introduced the doubt about Cæsar's ambition:



“If I were disposed to stir your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage.” Notice the strong appeal to the spirit of curiosity, as strong a passion in many, especially uneducated, minds: “his will, which, pardon me, I do not mean to read;” how he dare not read it for fear of enlisting their feelings too strongly on Cæsar’s behalf; how cleverly he disclaims, as if casually, the important fact that they, the people, were his heirs: and then observe the almost undisguised scorn in which he now speaks of the honourable men, anticipating the reply from some—“they were traitors;” exacting from all the universal cry of “the will, the testament!” He is now on the full flood-tide of success, and has only to consider how he may safely steer his ship into port; yet he will excite the raging waves more: his object is sedition, mutiny, and rage; death to the conspirators, fire to their homes.

He now appeals victoriously, in no timid uncertain note as before, to their pity for Cæsar. He makes them stand with him round the body; he kindles again the old Roman worship of military distinctions, as he holds up the scarred and rent mantle, and reminds them in one line of his own

presence too at one of the hardest fought of all Cæsar's great battles, "the day he overcame the Nervii." What recollections must have thrilled through them of the oft-repeated news of fresh victories won, fresh provinces torn from their hereditary enemy the Gaul; of countries, before untrodden by a Roman, made part of the imperial domain—that domain of which they were the lords. Then picture the impassioned gestures of the orator as he described, carefully prolonging the account in each detail, the separate wounds of each conspirator. And see the deepening fury on each swarthy southern face, the wildness of revenge which southern nations alone are capable of feeling or expressing. "Now you weep," as you look but at the mantle. He has excited all this burst of passion by the dead garment alone; now come and regard the late living body which it contained.

But the work must not be done by halves; the mob must be possessed with the conviction of the worthlessness of the conspirators, and the overwhelming claim that Cæsar has upon their love. How inimitable is the suggestion, that as this assassination could not have been done on public grounds, there

must have been private ones, arousing by a line the latent distrust of the governed for the governing: "What private griefs they have, alas! I know not." While his disclaiming all eloquence such as Brutus had would be almost ludicrous, did we not remember that an excited crowd will believe any thing. One more appeal to their pity: "Sweet Cæsar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths," followed by the reminder of the will and the announcement of its contents, and the successful orator may well hug himself with the thought that "mischief is well a-foot," and be reckless of its consequences.

I could add not a little upon the words put into the mouths of the different individuals amongst the audience, the very "mobile vulgus;" but though there is a very good study of the worshipful many-headed (under which appellation I should include myself or you, if we were found shouting a modern equivalent to "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and quite ignorant of "why we had all come together"); yet I have in this essay proposed to set before you one consideration only; and I think you will admit that I have been as good as my word—that I have given you reason to think that Shakespeare is not alto-

gether useless for practical life, but would teach you one thing at least, how to talk a mob over into accordance with your own views ; in other words, how to make a capital speech from the hustings.

## XVI.

### ON NOVELS.

WHEN, about a hundred years ago, a worthy country rector wrote a series of letters to his pupils, one of which was on Novels, he could not but speak ill of them, both as regarded their intrinsic worth and tendencies: and any one who is at all acquainted with the works to which he refers, will, I think, in the main, endorse his condemnation. Happily, since he wrote, we have seen a totally new school of novelists arise; and so far from condemning the works of a great majority of them, I heartily wish I could induce you to read them much more than you do; and this I feel not merely in the despairing spirit in which a paterfamilias is reported to have ejaculated, "If my boys would read any thing—if they would only read *Punch*, I should have better hopes of them;" but rather as believing that a great amount of real and valuable infor-

mation is contained in them—some, perhaps, which you will hardly find elsewhere. Now, of course, as of most things, “there are novels and novels;” and I know that there is more trash introduced into public life in this costume than in any other—more history falsified, truth caricatured, impossibilities created, life distorted. Yet, on the other hand, there is in the works of the best (and they are happily very numerous) such admirable sketches of life both past and present, such happy analysis of character, so many beauties of style, that we may well say of them what Hamlet said a play should be, that they “hold as ’twere a mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.” There is no young man who is to move in your position in life who would not be better armed to play his part in life well by knowing two or three of Thackeray’s novels well; he would there see at least “how scorn was shown her own image;” and might start with a sounder estimate and truer value of meanness, and flattery, and self-conceit, and every thing untruthful.

Not to burden you with many names,

and in order to simplify my remarks as much as possible, I will confine myself to the three great novelists of the century—the three to whom I think all others would concede the palm, or whom they would consider the best after themselves—the value put upon Themistocles by the confederate generals after Salamis. The great Duke of Marlborough used to say that all he knew of English history was contained in Shakespeare; and on the same principle he would, no doubt, had the Wizard of the North then lived, have added to his store a good deal more of history from Scott's novels. You might get much worse information from many professed historians: indeed it has been evident, ever since the days of Herodotus and Thucydides, that to be a good historian you must possess some of the qualifications of both tragedian and novelist: if you would describe a character correctly, you must have insight into character, a delicate perception of motive, traceable often in unimportant actions; and if you would describe a scene correctly, you must wield the wand of the magician, and picture the past by an effort of the imagination. The famous "characters" in Clarendon's History demanded

talents of the same nature to describe them as did Shakespeare's Henrys and Richards. Macanlay's word-pictures of the trials of the seven bishops and of Warren Hastings are the results of the employment of the same faculties as those which painted the pageants in *Kenilworth*, or the torture-scene in *Old Mortality*.

I do not deny that there is truth in the criticism, that Scott's novels have too much of a family-likeness amongst them,—that there is too uniform a set of characters throughout: but a man must be a much greater novel-reader than you are likely to be at present to discover that weakness; and when he has found it in Scott, he will find it as unmistakably and quite as inexensably in other novelists: but of this I am sure, that you will learn not a little sound history from the Crusades, to the "Forty-five," and gain a considerable insight into all—and especially Scotch—character by a perusal of Scott's novels. You will have brought vividly before you, painted in colours which can never entirely fade, the enthusiastic crusade-period both at home and abroad, the brilliant court of Elizabeth, London life in James I.'s time, the days of the Puritan ascendancy, and the



reaction against that ascendancy under the third Stuart, the tale of mingled cruelty and courage of the fanatic Covenanters, the hopeless attempt of Fifteen, and the all-but successful one of Forty-five,—all described in language as vivid as the style is natural, and by a pen guided by so high a sense of duty that not one word calls for erasure to meet the eyes of the purest-minded or most fastidious. If for no other purpose, Scott's novels will always be studied as examples of a perfectly unaffected style, untainted by a pretentiousness which other great novelists might well have avoided.

You have told me more than once, when called on to write an essay descriptive of some place or scene, how difficult a work it is either to think of what to say, or to find fit words in which to express your ideas. I cannot do better than recommend to you a careful study of some of Scott's descriptions: you will find them very numerous scattered up and down his writings: indeed they are the distinguishing feature of his works, and so good that the most exacting critic has never yet found fault with them. Among the best is his picture of the coast of Fife-shire in *The Antiquary*, under the circum-

stances of a gathering and then raging tempest, and with all the natural awfulness of the scene heightened by the narrow escape of the chief characters from death. It is too good not to be quoted at length :

“ The sun was now resting his huge disk upon the edge of the level ocean, and gilded the accumulation of towering clouds through which he had travelled the livelong day, and which now assembled on all sides, like misfortunes and disasters around a sinking empire and fallen monarch. Still, however, his dying splendour gave a sombre magnificence to the massive congregation of vapours, forming out of their unsubstantial gloom the show of pyramids and towers—some touched with gold, some with purple, some with a hue of deep and dark red. The distant sea, stretched beneath this varied and gorgeous canopy, lay almost portentously still, reflecting back the dazzling and level beams of the descending luminary, and the splendid colouring of the clouds amidst which he was setting. Nearer to the beach the tide rippled onward in waves of sparkling silver, that imperceptibly yet rapidly gained upon the sand. . . . Following the windings of the beach, they passed one projecting point of headland or rock after another, and now found themselves under a huge and continued extent of precipices by which that iron-bound coast is in most places defended. Long projecting reefs of rock, extending under water, and only evincing their existence by here and there a peak entirely bare, or by the breakers which foamed over those that were partially covered, rendered Knockwinnock Bay dreaded by pilots and shipmasters. The crags which rose between the beach and the mainland to the height of two or three hundred feet afforded in their crevices shelter

for unnumbered sea-fowl, in situations seemingly secured by their dizzy height from the rapacity of man. Many of these wild tribes, with the instinct that sends them to seek the land before a storm arises, were now winging towards their nests with the shrill and dissonant clang which announces disquietude and fear. The disk of the sun became almost totally obscured ere he had altogether sunk below the horizon, and an early and lurid shade of darkness blotted the serene twilight of a summer evening. The wind began to arise; but its wild and moaning sound was heard for some time, and its effects became visible on the bosom of the sea, before the gale was felt on shore. The mass of waters, now dark and threatening, began to lift itself in larger ridges, and sink in deeper furrows, forming waves that rose high in foam upon the breakers, or burst upon the beach with a sound resembling distant thunder."

You will hardly, after reading this, experience the "aching void" you speak of upon having to describe a well-known scene; and this is but one specimen of very many scores of such in Scott's novels: it is one of the best, but there are not a few others equal to it; such as the rush of the flood-tide over the Solway Firth in *Redgauntlet*, the wildness of the border-land in *Guy Mannering*, and the iron coast of Galloway in the same novel, the Scotch highlands in *Waverley*, and even scenes which were known to the writer only by books and described only through the united effort of a well-stored memory and a

rich imagination, such as the Syrian desert in *The Talisman*, or the Alpine pass in *Anne of Geierstein*, which latter a Swiss critic could not believe had been written by a man who had never seen a glacier or heard an avalanche. Nor indeed was it in descriptions of natural scenery only that Scott's genius was preëminent: whenever the canvas had to be filled by many figures, the more lively was the scene, the more successful were the artist's efforts. He will introduce you into the golden pageantry of Elizabeth's court as readily as Shakespeare does into the stately revels of the courts of her father and her father's great minister. Would you traverse the streets of London in days when the apprentices' persuasive tongues were employed at the doors, instead of, as now, behind the counters? Scott will take you down the Strand arm-in-arm with Nigel. He will usher you into the courts of kings as readily as into the worshipful society of Alsatians and gipsies; he is equally at home by the farmer's snug fireside, in the smuggler's boat, at the hospitable board of a Saxon thane, or the silent supper of the rigid Puritan. You cannot fail of being carried along with your cicerone: you feel the spell

of the magician upon you, and obey you must.

It is fair criticism that Scott's types of character are not many. It is true they are not; but the few there are are perfect in their way. We will omit all historical characters—and you may go further and fare worse in your search after better likenesses of them—but his own creations are well worth an introduction to. In these days, when law and society necessarily level many eccentricities, and help to throw the leaden mantle of uniformity over all of us, it is pleasant to be introduced to such extinct species as Edie Ochiltree and Meg Merri-lies and the faithful Caleb, and to realise what life must have been like in days that could evoke the mercenary courage of Dugald Dalgetty, or the iron fanaticism of Balfour of Burley. You will find all the richest and best types of Scott's characters—all the raciest humour and all the truest pathos—in (as is natural) his Scotch novels. After all, the petty belt of land from the Grampians to the Cheviots, and from the Firth of Forth to Portpatrick, is Scott's own. All his best novels (with the single exception of the *Pirate*) took root in that soil. It was to him what

the backwoods of America were to Cooper; what England—not the United Kingdom—has been to Dickens; and London fashionable life and English country-houses have been to Thackeray.

The original idea of the Scott monument at Edinburgh—still, I believe, incomplete—was to surround the central figure of the great magician with the figures of the characters which his spirit had called from the vasty deep. It would have been far more in accordance with his genius to have executed his great historical and exquisite natural scenes in fresco, in a hall which would have led up to the great master's statue, while still adorning that hall with statues of the best of his characters. But the time when he died was not ripe for such a work; we had not architectural knowledge sufficient to see that rows of statues in the open air are an extravagant absurdity in a northern climate; and there was no general perception then of the vast superiority of his scenes over his characters; or rather the school had not then risen which was to delineate the various shades of character of the present as skilfully as he had roughly but vigorously painted the past, else it would have indeed been a memo-

rial worthy of the subject to have enshrined Scott in a hall glowing with bright colours, where under one roof the impetuous Charles of Burgundy and his wily suzerain, the courtly Leicester and the witty Rochester, the unhappy Queen of Scots and the brilliant Chevalier, might have delighted the eyes of many generations. Nor would room have been wanting for homelier scenes; and the Antiquary might have discovered the Prætorium, and Caleb Balderstone have rubbed his imaginary plate, and old Mause have preached martyrdom to the unwilling Cuddie, and Dandie Dimmont have mustered the many generations of Peppers and Mustards for ever. *Dis aliter visum.* May future generations recognise their opportunities more wisely, and may Scott's characters and scenes be part of the education of all future Englishmen, as they have been of every educated Englishman hitherto!

## XVII.

### ON NOVELS. No. 2.

THE enormous popularity which Dickens met with from the outset of his career leaves me the less to say, as you are acquainted with more of his novels than of any other author. There is, perhaps, more mere amusement and less information to be gained from them than from either of the two other great novelists. The lessons which Dickens undoubtedly intended to convey, and to a considerable extent did successfully impart, are now less needed; not a little, we may believe, thanks to his writings. To take but two instances: this much is certain, that an improvement in the character and competency of nurses for the sick dates from the introduction of the firm of Mesdames Gamp and Prig to the public; and the fact that some dozen northern private schoolmasters threatened Dickens with legal proceedings is a pretty clear proof that the mysteries of



Do-the-boys Hall were most righteously unveiled to the public gaze. I cannot recommend you to study Dickens for style. It is sometimes slipshod and weak, and sometimes strained and artificial. The weaknesses of an author's style are seen most vividly in his admirers and imitators; and you will see Dickens's style unintentionally caricatured, and that to perfection, in many of the second-rate periodicals of the day. Nor is the author to blame for this. Through all time Horace's "imitatores servum peens" will abound,—men who have neither the taste to perceive nor the sense to avoid the exaggerations of a master. Doubtless Dickens, too, has many a time felt what Horace not only felt but expressed :

"ut mihi sæpe

Bilem, sæpe jocum vestri movere tumultus."

Sometimes you will find an English scene painted in words singularly forcible and appropriate, as the well-known gale at Great Yarmouth in *David Copperfield*; but from the very first and best of all his works it is unmistakably apparent what his real powers are. Humour rich and rare; the happiest conception, not merely of individual cha-

acter, but of the funniest circumstances in which to place them; the most felicitous filling of the canvas by each figure in its right place; a certain extravagance of absurdity which is never out of place in the society in which it occurs,—are characteristics which at once assured and have since secured to him the widest and most lasting popularity of all contemporary novelists.

There is no doubt a certain latent error in this excess of fun; his life is rather that of children than of men; and after the publication of his first and richest display of humour, Dickens felt the truth which Shakespeare has in all his plays persistently maintained, that life is not all joke nor all seriousness. In his most solemn tragedies there is some comedy, in the cheerfullest melodrama some tragedy: the careworn Bolingbroke and his fiery nobles are succeeded in the next scene by Falstaff, and Bardolf, and Mrs. Quickly; the road to battle lies by Justice Shallow's country house; Hamlet does not die until he has "chaffed" the grave-digger in his own quaint vein. You will soon notice for yourself, as you read, where Dickens's superiority lies, and you will probably regret with me that there are not more *Pickwicks*, and less

*Bleak Houses*, despite the fact that *Pickwick* is a burlesque throughout.

I shall add no more about Dickens than that I am sure you may spend many an idle hour worse than in the worshipful society of Sam Weller, Mr. Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp, Mr. Bumble, and Mr. Micawber. How many who were young when Mrs. Gamp first quoted Mrs. Harris would wish that they had no worse-spent hours to look back upon!

It is a remarkable fact that two writers so great and so dissimilar should have been contemporaries as Dickens and Thackeray. I will merely point out to you that they are almost the counterparts of one another, and leave you to conjecture whether, if the powers of both had been united in one person, we should not have had a man great with something of Shakespeare's greatness, that many-sidedness which all can admire and none can attain to. In Thackeray you will find the daily life of London, fashionable and idle, as well as laborious and vulgar, described in language equally lively, nervous, and exact. You may learn many a lesson in self-knowledge, as the critic cruelly lays bare the mixed motives which too often guide our best, and the mean ones which guide the worst, of our

actions: "*mutato nomine, de me fabula narratur,*" each of us may, in one page or another, say of ourselves. And we can never admire enough the valiant battle he wages throughout with shams of all kinds; from sham dinner-parties to sham patriotism, which latter Dr. Johnson well defined as "the last refuge of a scoundrel."

The predominant element in Thackeray's writings is undoubtedly the critical spirit; a spirit of almost suspicious mistrust of all external appearances. He reminds one of the instruments we have read of detectives using to discover hidden papers—hammers to tap for secret drawers, long skewers to probe cushions and chair-seats. Perhaps (for perfect works of art) there is too much of it in his novels; but consider whether in a country where wealth has increased far faster than education has improved—I don't mean only learning, but the mental training which makes the gentleman and lady—where with many a display of money and money's worth is the sole test and criterion of the gentleman—whether such a preacher as Thackeray was not imperatively called for, and does not exactly meet the wants of the times. And none but very superficial readers—and these

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are the last novels to be read superficially—would assert that Thackeray's heart does not warm as readily to goodness as his *sava indignatio* kindles at untruthfulness or cruelty. As one of the best illustrations of the truth of this, I would advise you to read without delay, if you have not done so already, that very clever pair of pictures, the "Curate's Walk," and a "Dinner in the City," published in the second volume of "Miscellanies." You will rarely find any thing more tender, loving, kindly, and good, than the former; the different sketches of the three little sisters in their solitary home, which they keep exquisitely neat, and where they work all day—the eldest of them ten, who "had been a mother ever since she was five"—their Sunday "holiday" spent at church and the Sunday-school; the description of the room, with the tea got ready at three o'clock P.M., two or three bits of dry bread and a jug of water—could not have been drawn but by a man whose heart warmed instinctively to all that was good and true.

Notice too the quiet satire in the account of the glories of Mr. Filch's shop-window; the scene so natural when the drunken father sends the child off before he goes to drink

away the value of the waistcoat just pawned ; the keen insight which could see the pride of the shoemaker of "advanced" opinions, as the proud priest supplied him with food and money ; and above all, the humorous episode of the children to whom, "though knowing it is wrong to give away large sums of money promiscuously," he gives a penny ; and the neglect of the mangy puppy that ensued thereupon. You will hardly find in all Thackeray's works a better example of his singular power (the kindly heart and vigorous brain) than is contained in this simple little story.

And the pendant is as good a miniature of his powers of another class. The assembling of the guests, the decorations of the table, the enumeration of the viands, culminate in the summary of the banquet itself :

"A steam of meats, a flare of candles, a rushing to and fro of waiters, a ceaseless clinking of glass and steel, a dizzy mist of gluttony, out of which I can see my old friend of the turtle-soup making terrific play among the peas, his knife darting down his throat."

But, above all, do not merely read but study the speeches ; they are models of what after-dinner oratory should not be, to all time : the helpless blunders of the old general, the

pompous emptiness of the secretary of the tape and sealing-wax office, the fluent conceit of the American minister, are all alike inimitable.

I have spoken as yet only of Thackeray's powers as an artist: what I value most is Thackeray the moralist; and I wish that any of you who are to enter upon Belgravian life knew all his great novels well. Forearmed is forewarned; and it is well to have read of all kinds of character—of both Lady Kew and Lady Rockminster, Colonel Newcome and the Marquis of Farintosh, Ethel and Becky Sharpe—before you meet them. And in these novels you will travel far beyond English homes of kindness and boudoirs of scandal. Would you like to know the sort of company that waits your arrival at a German gambling board? Here is one of them drawn to the life:

“That man, so calm and well-bred, with a string of orders on his breast, so well dressed, with such white hands, has stabbed trusting hearts, severed family ties, written lying vows, signed false oaths, torn up pitilessly tender appeals for redress, and tossed away into the fire supplications blistered with tears; packed cards and clogged dice, and used pistol or sword as calmly and dexterously as he now ranges his battalions of gold pieces.”

You may travel in Thackeray's company (and who could wish for better?) more than once through the Rhine country and Switzerland, into all the ruined glories of ancient Rome, and the eccentricities of artist life in modern Rome; you can attend a ball at the Prince Polignac's, or smoke your cigar at the Café Greco; but, after all, as the Border land was Scott's own country, so the Parks, and Belgravia, and Brighton, in the season, are Thackeray's: he will point out all the notabilities to you down Rotten Row and in the Opera; will introduce you to a quiet party at Greenwich, and a noisy one at the Star and Garter; and so will many another novelist, but they will not raise the veil and show you the real characters of the men as Thackeray will; you will not learn from them, as you do from Thackeray, to see the meanness concealed beneath the cloak of ostentation, and hypocrisy in the mask of honour: above all, few others will give you such true views of life, few will be true to truth, and dare to describe the gallant simple-minded preux chevalier dying in his little room, a pensioner at Greyfriars—concerning which I will only say I do not envy the man who can read that chapter with dry eyes—and Miss Becky



Sharpe entertaining her clique at Bath as Lady Crawley. And yet each had reaped as they had sown; but few novelists are true enough to say so in their works. It was right that Becky's manœuvres should end in a somewhat questionable respectability in Bath society, and that the simple-minded Colonel Newcome's childlike character should be the victim of his own simplicity, and that he should be deserted by the friends of his wealth.

And yet even now Thackeray's works are (like Tennyson's) caviare to the multitude: they are harder to appreciate than either Dickens or Scott, or indeed than any other of our novelists; harder because they contain a more subtle and more profound analysis of character, because they are written to teach as well as to amuse; harder because they describe a society of which the *ignobile vulgus* care only to hear scandal; harder because the great British public is not yet educated to appreciate the delicate shades of character by which Thackeray chiefly charms us, the mixed motives, the weaknesses of the good, the nobler moments of the frivolous or selfish; but all the more therefore should excellences such as these, so true to nature,

and yet so rare in books, be felt and admired by men of education. There is too a tone of melancholy pervading his finest works which is characteristic of all the greatest authors, and of none but the greatest; and this too will probably long retard the popularity of his writings amongst the large class to whom a burlesque is the noblest effort of the drama, and a sensation novel the perfection of literature. It is a simple subject the sight of an old letter; but read what associations it recalls to a man of deep feeling:

“See the faded ink on the yellow paper that may have crossed and recrossed the ocean, that has lain locked in chests for years and buried under piles of family archives, while your friends have been dying and your head has grown white. Who has not disinterred mementos like these, from which the past smiles at you so sadly, shimmering out of Hades an instant, but to sink back again into the cold shades, perhaps with a faint, faint sound, as of a remembered tone—a ghostly echo of a once-familiar laughter? I was looking of late at a wall in the Naples Museum, whereon a boy of Herculaneum, eighteen hundred years ago, had scratched with a nail the figure of a soldier. I could fancy the child turning round and smiling at me after having done his etching. Which of us that is thirty years old has not had his Pompeii? Deep under ashes lies the life of youth, the careless sport, the pleasure and passion, the darling joy. You open an old letter-box and look at your own childish scrawls, or

your mother's letters to you when you were at school, and excavate your heart. O me ! for the day when the whole city shall be bare, and the chambers unroofed, and every cranny visible to the light above, from the Forum to the Lupanar !”

## XVIII.

### TO A PUPIL AT THE UNIVERSITY.

I DO certainly recommend you to join both the "Union" and the "Amateur Dramatic;" and I will defend my advice not only on the ground of reason but of antiquity; the most redoubtable conservative of ancient customs shall admit the force of the argument.

You are not expected, you tell me, by your friends to take more than an ordinary degree: if it were otherwise, I should still advise your joining one of the two societies you were asking me about; and that because a man not only needs much in life that he can learn otherwise than through books, but yet further, he needs much that books cannot possibly teach him in any way. It is a curious fact in the history of University studies that every object of study except book-work has steadily died out there; only one important name is left at Cambridge testifying

to quite a different line of study in days gone by. The wranglers were really the ablest disputants of their year; the moderators played the part, and somewhat more, of the moderator in the Scotch ecclesiastical assemblies—they were chairmen, and guided and judged the fray. Whether or no the University has done wisely in abolishing *all* this training—training, you will notice, of quite a different kind to that tested by papers in an examination-hall—time alone will decide; but I do without hesitation maintain the belief that the lessons once taught by “wrangling” in the schools are now taught, perhaps more effectually because less compulsorily, in the Union debating rooms and on the boards of the Amateur Dramatic. Powers of composition are at least as valuable as those of analysis; we have run crazy on criticism in England ever since Coleridge’s time; it would be well if the tables were turned for a while, and we had more of the old training of the wranglers and less of the modern training of books alone: the one evoked quickness in perception, readiness in language, facility in reply, self-dependence, presence of mind, and the qualities necessary for men in any public station. Now as no men seek an University

education who do not intend to appear more or less in public life, I earnestly advise you to seize the only opportunities of cultivating these powers which University life still offers you. Your work for your examinations will teach you to think; what you want further, is to gain the result of thought—composition, not criticism; synthesis, as it is technically termed, not analysis. For all University men, as a rule, are preparing for one of three spheres of life—the barrister's, the country gentleman's, or the clergyman's. As regards the first of these professions, how many able men have been lost to active life, and been obliged to subside into chamber-counsel, from want of the powers we have spoken of, is known really to none, and can only be very slightly guessed at; but by all accounts it is considerable. In their case one failure from want of language, readiness, tact, or presence of mind, is fatal; the victim passes away into obscurity: and perhaps many wish that the victims of a similar incapacity in the other two spheres of life did the same; but they don't, and this is often very visible and very vexatious. For, say what you will, it is a sad deficiency not to possess the slightest fragment of that gift which has been well

defined as "the power of thinking on your legs." It is a serious drawback for a young man entering public life to have the sneer recorded against him that he managed the speech in his hat not so badly after all: it is a real affliction to be seized with a fit of sudden dumbness as you rise to propose some trivial toast at a bucolic festival: it is a real grief to a high-minded clergyman to tread out the weary round of formal sermons week by week, to notice the flagging interest and watch the glazing eyes and nodding heads of his congregation, and know that his rival the Independent tinker can, any evening in the week, collect hundreds of the parishioners on the village-green to listen to his execrable theology, but homely and vigorous English.

Now as you have to look forward to facing some of these difficulties before many more years of your life are over, you are unquestionably right in having chosen to add this especial study to those now provided by Alma Mater; and if you were reading for high honours, I should (after some years' experience of the world) advise your joining one of the two societies you name, as in your case I advise joining both. And this I do knowing well the common objections raised

against either, which are, like most objections, "very sound as far as they go." It is easy enough to ridicule the speakers at the Union (where, by the way, I never made one myself); but if all societies were to be snubbed, and if possible abolished, where absurd speeches were made, what would become of the great debating society at St. Stephen's, Westminster? If no crude knowledge, no exaggerated statements, no "tall talk," were to be permitted, the daily papers would be vacant with the horrible vacancy of the recess all the year round. A sneer never proved any thing yet, except how very disagreeable the sneerer was; but you may be sure that if you begin by carefully listening to debates of the Union, and by degrees gain confidence to take part in them, you will acquire powers at least as valuable as a knowledge of Paley's profound morality, or of the construction of a common-(place) pump; you will exercise your memory in collecting materials for your own orations, your judgment in seizing upon the right points to which to reply in your opponent's speech; you will add enormously to your vocabulary and to your knowledge of the strength and resources of the English language.



This last acquisition alone is a matter of the very greatest importance. How often of late years have really able men broken down in public life from the pure and simple ignorance of their own language. Even when they had mastered their subject thoroughly, and held their disconnected facts (like marbles loose in a bag) at command by the thousand together, they could not collect the scattered threads, or weave them into any fabric presentable to the least fastidious audience. And it is no use to possess threads of purple and lawn and gold, if you can only produce them as frayed, as meagre, as dilapidated as the jacket of a ragged schoolboy. Depend upon it there was much to be said for the old wrangling or disputing in the schools in former days; it degenerated no doubt into a farce, but the spirit should have been maintained, though the form was changed:

“The old order changeth, giving place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways.”

But the clean sweep that was made of all oral examination, and the entire substitution of paper-work, are at best questionable advantages. No doubt writing is the test of accuracy, and accuracy is the first thing ne-

cessary in mental discipline; but the many mental powers elicited, developed, and matured by debate, are of no slight weight in the daily affairs of men, and must always remain so. It is, too, a considerable advantage for a man who has not the goal of "honours" before his eyes, to have set before him a weekly subject for discussion; some at least of the subjects proposed will be to your taste; and you will surely lay no bad foundation for more complete knowledge as a politician in the careful study of a few such subjects at your present time of life. It is notorious that many of the best speakers of late years in "the House" were foremost in the debates of the Oxford Union of their day; and Ruskin would probably tell you that it is to the same practice that he owes the power of "calling from the vasty deep," not spirits, but living words, which indeed are instinct with a life and spirit of their own, whether he wants with them to colour a cottage wall, or catch the fleeting thunder-cloud,—whether to employ them on errands of invective or sarcasm, or to invoke pity or awe. As regards the amateur acting, of course the great attraction to you is in the fun of the thing, and that I can fully sympa-

thuse with ; but there is much more than this in the background. It is no slight gain to be able to acquire even a few of the qualifications of a good actor ; it is not every body who can so throw off his own personality and identify himself with the feelings, desires, circumstances, and character of another. And the strengthening one's memory is no slight consideration : you must "learn your part"—in a very different sense to that in which you learned it at your repetition lessons at school ; and if you want to become a good actor, you must fully understand all the parts of the other characters who appear with you. The merely intellectual labour required is of itself no slight recommendation ; and if any body has a doubt about the general tendencies of such an amusement, let him read the account of the Eton private theatricals of about half a century ago, in that amusing account of Eton entitled *Etoniana*.

There may be, of course, objections to the Amateur Dramatic, independent altogether of the principle of the thing ; there may be at times an undesirable body of men at the head of it, with whom it is not prudent for you to associate. That is a separate question altogether, and must be treated in-

dependently. Your own sense and good feeling must, then, decide your course. I have written merely regarding the spirit and object of the two societies; and if quickness of perception, readiness of speech, fluency of language, and a graceful carriage, are matters of real importance in the affairs of life, then, on the principle that whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well, I shall hope to hear of you as a "skilful gladiator" in debate, and a "decided success" on the amateur boards. It is well known that for purposes of public speaking there are few schools more effective than the amateur theatre. The *copia verborum* supplied by the study of several parts in different plays is very great. The strengthening of the memory, by the continual exercise in which it is kept by the *tours de force* which on an emergency it must be capable of, is far more important than is generally imagined. You gain too in habits of confidence and self-dependence. You are prepared to face, not shrink from, the public. There is no ordeal so sharp, no test so crucial, as the criticism of your own equals. The value of this test is one of the commonest arguments for the maintenance of the old custom of reciting speeches at our

public schools; and if true in that case, it is doubly true in the one before us: "a man must screw up his courage to the sticking-place" before he can run the gauntlet of men as unsparing of criticism as University men naturally are.

## XIX.

### HOW IS ONE TO LEARN TO DRAW?

OF all the “accomplishments,” as they are most erroneously termed, there is none, perhaps, the ignorance of which is more often regretted in later years, or whose principles are more easily mastered in youth, than this of drawing. I am speaking of drawing with pencil or pen, not of painting in any material. It is a curious but well-proved fact that numbers of people are born more or less colour-blind, as numbers are more or less unmusical, that is, music-deaf; but very few, if any, are blind to form and shadow; and drawing is nothing else but the correct representation of these two. If but a fraction of the time that is laboriously wasted, sometimes upon languages, sometimes on music, sometimes on so-called science, *i. e.* young ladies’ school-room science (Heaven save the mark!), were devoted to studying drawing on right principles, our sight would be disciplined, and a

habit of correct observation would be formed—a point of paramount importance, and one of the first characteristics of an educated mind—and we should be furnished with one of the pleasantest companions on our journeys abroad or at home, there being no diary to compare with a well-filled sketch-book, and besides, with a pleasant employment for many an idle hour, on wet days, when even chronic billiards and an occasional look at the stables will not keep off the evil spirit of *ennui*.

Some studies are almost impossibilities to many minds, and minds too of no ordinary calibre. No power on earth, Dr. Arnold said, could have made him understand a really difficult problem in algebra. That eminent scholar the late Archdeacon Hare was another example of the same inability. A correct pronunciation of French is probably never acquired by any man after the age of twenty. The first rudiments of science are to many as incomprehensible as I have been told music is to many scientific or literary minds. But it may be doubted whether there really are so many as five per cent in your position, and with your education, who could not be taught to draw correctly—I

mean so as to give pleasure to themselves and convey information to others. The remarkable success of drawing-lessons established amongst classes without half your education and opportunities, has decidedly proved how liberally nature has endowed us all with this power of describing the distant and the unseen. And yet it is painfully evident that drawing is unpopular. I am continually met with the same answer: "I wish I could learn; but it is awfully stupid work, learning." The reason is truer than many similar ones; the study is made an awfully stupid one. Its unpopularity lies in the fact of the extremely unreasonable system on which it is taught; a system which makes no pretence to a knowledge of principles, which teaches a hodge-podge of disjointed facts, or rather fails of teaching even them, from the weariness and disgust which its stupidity is sure to create.

Now there are but two difficulties to be mastered, two points of study in all; one is form, and the other is shadow. By the first you observe and imitate the relative shape and size of objects, and their relative distance from each other; by the second you discover and imitate the secret of their round-



ness, and the effect of sun-light upon them. You can get no further by drawing than this: *form* will tell you that in distance objects appear, and therefore must be represented, smaller than those nearer to you; and *shadow* will tell you that in distance shadows will, except in a partially lighted scene, appear lighter, until they disappear into the sky-shadow in the distance; every thing being more or less shadow, except the sun itself.

If you really wish to teach yourself—and, if you have a spark of enthusiasm, you may get far worse instructors—get Ruskin's *Elements of the Art of Drawing*, a small and perfectly intelligible volume, and from it (*experto crede*) you will learn more in a few days than any ordinary drawing-master will teach you in his lifetime. Ruskin will show you how to draw a common pebble, taken by chance out of the road; and you will feel how when once that has been really mastered, you can then easily draw a distant alp, and a fleecy cloud curling round its precipices. But you must honestly and laboriously follow his advice; not skip some lessons and rush on to more interesting ones; and above all, I advise you to attend to his hints about

the use of the pen. You may be grievously disgusted after a few years to find the gloss and depth and richness of your pencil-drawing fast disappearing; but the pen work is as enduring as print: and we may humbly remember, too, that such artists as Raphael and Rembrandt and Turner would not have used the pen so freely without good reason. I mention this because pen-shading is at once far more tedious and difficult than pencil-work, and at your age present difficulties are often more regarded than future advantages.

Do not either be disheartened by some kind friend assuring you that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," which of all common sayings (the tyrannous "*chacun à son goût*" alone excepted) has been perhaps the most abused. A little *knowledge* is never a dangerous thing; a little smattering is not only dangerous, but contemptible; but if you study in the way I have mentioned, your learning must be knowledge, not smattering: knowledge is founded on principle, smattering on isolated facts—"cram" work, in short. However you may succeed, you will at least attach a higher value to form wherever seen, and a deeper meaning to shadow; and I shall

be much mistaken if you do not soon overcome the drudgery, and begin to fill your sketch-book with a keener sense of pleasure than of toil.

One word more : do not undervalue drawing because you cannot colour ; it would be as unreasonable to depreciate a sufficient knowledge of music to accompany a ballad because you can't play Beethoven's sonatas. If you have the "colour" in you, colour will be sure to follow ; in many cases I am sure it will follow ; it is not easy to study the simpler principles of form and shadow without a longing to penetrate the mystery of colour too. Here again, as in drawing, you will find that there are principles which you must grasp, which is exactly the point that masters in general do not teach you ; and here again you will find much practical advice in the same book of Ruskin to which I have already referred you. After the principles contained in that little volume have been well digested, you will do well to get instruction from a master in the mechanical part of painting. Whether any of their instruction beyond the merely mechanical consists of the gold of principles or the tinsel of disjointed facts, you will be capable of judg-

ing for yourself, and acting upon your judgment. But even if the study of colour does not follow, you will still find yourself in later days looking with delight over your sketches of foreign tours, and recalling many a pleasant recollection of friends, perhaps gone from you for ever, whose jokes and laughter and kindliness come back through the potent spell of a few lines hastily scribbled on the leaf of a small drawing-book.

XX.

“HOW AWFULLY TEDIOUS WORK IS!”

YOU tell me that you find your work wearisome and uninteresting. I am not at all surprised to hear it, for I would not undertake to do the same kind of work on the terms you set yourself at any price: indeed I do not think I could do it. I am often surprised that, considering how much dead weight you carry, you get at all as near the winning-post as you do. I am perfectly certain I could not.

Supposing I had, with no previous knowledge of the history, to get up a German memoir (such as I have now before me) of the battle of Waterloo. I find here, in the course of a few pages, mention made of some eight or ten different personages, and the names of as many places. Now, supposing that I had “learned it to construe,” but had consulted neither biographical dic-

tionary nor map of the country, of what *interest* could the subject be to me ?

Men and places unknown must be the merest phantoms of their realities ; and the blame of want of interest must surely lie with myself, when I might have traced on a good map or plan of the battle each step the brave old Blucher made, and heard him, with a very small effort of the imagination, repeating his everlasting “ Forwards, my lads, forwards ! I say we must get forwards. I have promised my brother Wellington ; and you don’t wish me, I suppose, to break my word ;” when I might have studied Napoleon’s plan (so nearly successful) for cutting the allied armies in two ; and the natural advantages of the British position, chosen with such skill and defended with such dogged courage. And if I have not understood all this, whom have I to thank but myself ?

Now I do not say that Cæsar’s campaigns are as engrossing to a modern Englishman as Wellington’s ; but the actions of a great commander should always have their interest for all, and especially for one who intends to be a soldier himself ; and as you are studying the book, surely it is great folly not to make the history as entertaining as possible ;

and yet what interest can you feel in places you don't know where to find, and in personages who are to you mere names? If Caesar and Ariovistus are "very like one another, especially the latter," it must be indeed a dreary study. But when you have once mastered the geography and physical features of, for instance, Auvergne, you will then gain some idea of the nature of the last great struggle for Gallic independence, of the unwearied determination of the Roman, his marches through days of snow and ice, his siege-operations conducted on a scale to enclose 80,000 men within the fatal walls of circumvallation. But if you will not use the means you have before you to gain an intelligent appreciation of what you are reading, you have no right to turn round upon your subject and complain of its dryness.

I have given this as an illustration: the same principle holds good with whatever you do. I have explained it more at length in connection with the two studies of history and geography. There are two causes which produce this habit of imperfect learning: one—the less common of the two—a desire to learn too much in too short a space of time, gorging without digesting or assimilating

your mental food ; the second—much the most frequent—natural or acquired slovenliness of mind.

As regards the first, I would remind you that no knowledge is so useless as half-knowledge. Would you trust a man to shoe your horse who half knew his business ? I distinguish carefully between accurate knowledge of a part of a subject and imperfect acquaintance with the whole of it. If the lad could forge a shoe well, though he could not fit it, you would let him forge one while his master was fitting on another ; but how if he could only half-forge and half-fit the shoe ? A guide who knew thoroughly half an unexplored country might take you as far as his knowledge would take him, where you might find another guide for the rest of the route ; but what confidence could you place in a guide who knew only a little about the whole route, if bad weather came on, and you found yourself in the midst of a dense jungle, or near an extensive glacier ? A man who half knows any branch of study is just in this position. Better, if you are to be a soldier, to have studied five, two, or one campaign thoroughly, than to have wandered through acres of letterpress, and not to be



able to give a true account of a single siege, battle, or march, after all. The second cause—mere slovenliness of mind—is really so contemptible a habit, that the sooner a man is shamed out of it the better. It is the same habit exactly which makes your keeper half-clean your gun, your groom half-dress your horse; they have simply translated into practical matters what many are daily guilty of in the matter of learning; and you may be encouraged by the thought that if it be true that virtue is its own reward, it is doubly true in this particular. You change a dull insipid study into a pleasant and lively one; you turn, in fact, nonsense into sense, and “build yourself a lordly pleasure house,” instead of sitting in a chaos of broken bricks and splintered timbers.

There is a certain necessary association in all studies, and, as in most associations honestly carried out, you will find that mutual strength and aid is gained from them. A map is not at first sight an interesting object, and yet to Niebuhr or Arnold it gave as great a pleasure as the study of a masterpiece of painting gives to an artist; and for the same reasons both historians and artists see what to most of us is a sealed

book : a map was to them a picture on which they read the history of rising and falling empires, the marches and sieges and battles of great military geniuses, the conquests of diplomacy, the partition of kingdoms, the uniting of small countries into large ones, the struggles of rising liberty, the immigration of warlike and the extermination of effeminate tribes, the infusion of new blood into degenerate states ; in fact, all the varied changes of the great human family. And such a picture must a map become to all of us, more or less, if studied alongside of history. Take a map of one of your own counties ; take Leicestershire. I open a series of county maps at hazard ; the eye falls at once upon Leicester, where Wolsey came “ to lay his weary bones amongst you,” in the convent there ; upon Market Bosworth, the battle which gave us the dynasty which saw us safely through the Reformation and the Armada ; upon Lutterworth, where “ the day-spring of the Reformation ” rose, and we recal the time when the Church of those days cast Wickliffe’s ashes out “ into the Swift, when the Swift conveyed them to the Avon, and the Avon to the Severn, and Severn to the broad sea, which has carried them, with

the truths for which he contested, through all lands." We see the name of Market Harborough, where fled the tumultuous rout of Royalists pell-mell from Naseby, on the road to Leicester, the avenging sword of the ruthless Puritan close behind, so that many fell in the streets of the town itself; and if you have an ancient as well as a modern map of this part, you cannot fail to mark the four great roads converging upon the ancient *Ratæ*—the works of that nation of soldiers who knew that the spade and the mattock were as useful in war as the sword; that if the latter won battles, the former retained their advantages—the modern Leicester; while to this day the Watling Street forms its south-west boundary, as the silver Trent, for a short distance, forms the north-west boundary, and carries us back to the tripartite division of England in the insurrection against the "ingrate and cankered" Bolingbroke, when the fiery Hotspur proposed to dam up the "smug and silver" Trent, and make it flow more equitably for his share of the expected spoil. Many county maps—those especially of the larger ones—would supply at a glance to a very moderate historian as much as this; some indeed are

perfect mines of historical wealth. But to understand this, then, you must read your history intelligently, and “look out your places in a map.”

## XXI.

### HOW TO GIVE MONEY AWAY.

**Y**OU are quite right—it is no easy matter to give money away judiciously; and injudicious liberality has done mischief enough in this country, as the existence of that singular and barbarous tribe of nomads, the 30,000 tramps in England, will bear witness. You ask me for my advice as to how to perform best the duty of almsgiving. I give it with some diffidence. No doubt the experience of life will soon aid you to correct any erroneous impressions here conveyed.

One of the most thoughtful and at the same time most munificent of men, the late Archbishop Whateley, is reported to have said on his deathbed, “I have many faults and shortcomings to blame myself with, but I thank God I cannot accuse myself of having given away a penny in the streets.” The man who uttered these quaint and yet solemn words gave to cases of real distress sums that amounted to thousands of pounds

annually. He knew too well, as is more widely known now, that of the money given in the streets—cast away to rid oneself of importunity rather than to aid penury, the gift of indolence rather than of liberality—probably less than one - thousandth part assists the deserving. The rest pampers profligacy, supports drunkenness and gluttony, fosters laziness, deceit, and imposture, the cankers of our civilisation; for in proportion as you maintain these you discourage industry and honourable toil, you show the industrious poor how well men can live without industry, the truthful how well it answers to be a liar. The thoughtlessness that gives to every street beggar feeds in no slight measure the deepest ulcer in our body politic—the perennial pauperism extant in England.

But lest you should feel, as every kind-hearted man will, indisposed to let even the odd thousandth case pass away unaided, let me tell you how you may certainly assist that one deserving case, while refusing aid to the reprobate.

It is many years now since the Mendicity Society was established in London to meet this very evil; but its work, so unpreten-

tions and yet so effective, is not half as widely known as it is for the advantage of the country that it should be. Its action is very simple. On payment of a subscription you receive a certain number of tickets : these you distribute instead of money to the casual beggar. On presenting it at the society's offices he will have his case carefully investigated. The officers of the society are in constant communication with the police ; each application is correctly registered, each new face curiously scanned. And so thoroughly does this simple machinery effect its purpose, that you may learn there some very curious statistics relative to the difference between the number of tickets given away in the streets and those presented at the society's offices—the vast majority never presented at all. You may hear, too, some very instructive histories of disguises discovered by them, false histories detected, and even the very ablest professors of the science of imposition reduced to the narrowest straits for support within the precincts of their profession. “Do you know any thing of this case?” was asked at the office by a liberal friend of the needy, as he presented a begging letter to the secretary, in which typhus

fever and famine played a very prominent part. The reply was something to this effect: "Perfectly well, sir; that *case* has buried three wives and seventeen children and many fathers and mothers within the last fifteen months. He has within the same period been five times bankrupt by the rascality of a brother-in-law; twice smashed in railway accidents; twice turned out of excellent situations rather than surrender his conscientious scruples—once for being a Roman Catholic, once for being a Protestant; and during the last equinoctial gales he saved nothing but a straw hat and pair of canvas trousers from three different shipwrecks all in the same night."

The simple fact is this, that except in a quiet country village it is impossible to learn personally the exact truth about any application for aid. Some indeed of the most skilful begging-letter writers are prepared for you if you attempt to unearth them, and will take you to a room hired for the occasion, where poverty and sickness are simulated to the life. Only a society organised for the purpose, and in close connection with the police, can attempt to find the grain of truth in the gallon of falsehood.



You are already beset with begging letters. It is the fate of any man known to have money, and to be influenced by a sense of duty in the spending of it. Let us classify the letters. You will find them all to come under one of these heads :

1. Private begging letters.
2. Begging letters from clergy for their parishes.
3. Begging letters from societies for moral or religious purposes.

The first class I have already advised you to send *en masse* to the Mendicity Society, replying to the writer with a ticket of introduction to their officials, which introduction in the great majority of cases he will be ungrateful enough to decline. Of course there are exceptions to this rule ; applications from persons with whom you or your relations are personally acquainted, or such applications as men in public office receive, such as you will find mentioned in the lives of W. Wilberforce, Sir Robert Peel, and other well-known public characters ; applications reasonably made and courteously investigated, to which aid was often privately given with a delicacy of feeling which one cannot sufficiently admire.

As regards class No. 2, you will do well to examine each case separately, if you can. It is argued, and no doubt with reason, that as a general principle each parish should build and support its own church and schools. This principle, however, though excellent in theory, is impossible in practice, from the extreme poverty of some whole parishes or districts, not merely in London, but in all our larger towns. To meet this want there has arisen a system, far preferable to any private begging-letter plan, of connecting a wealthy parish at one end of a large town with a poverty-stricken parish at the other end, and thus making the superfluities of the one available for the support of the other. Here, I would say, give liberally, and give more than money; give your time, if possible, to organising such a system—a system by which the unnatural disseverance of rich and poor may be mitigated, if not abolished, and the most useful lesson in life taught to both, that we are all members one of another. At the same time I must honestly express my aversion to what seems the mere impertinence of those begging letters despatched wholesale from a well-to-do country parish to ask for aid for a carved font or a stained

window, or some (no doubt) useful and ornamental piece of church furniture, where it is manifest that if the parishioners really wanted those things, they would provide them for themselves; if they do not, the erection of them by others is a queer method of expressing the parishioners' spirit of self-sacrifice and delight in giving of their best to God's worship. The beauty of our old parish churches was not accomplished thus by their munificent founders.

I need hardly speak of the claims which your own parish has upon your support to its various little clubs for the benefit of the poor; their utility is universally admitted; and they demand support on no ground more than this, that they do what other charities fail altogether in doing—help the poor to help themselves; the most useful and needful lesson that can be taught them. If ever the chronic pauperism of the country is to be fairly grappled with, it will be through the spread of this principle. Soup-kitchens, gifts of bread, donations of all kinds, relieve immediate poverty, but they foster rather than remedy the disease of pauperism. On the other hand, every penny that you can get the poor to lay by, even temporarily, is a

stone thrown upon the cairn that marks the grave of pauperism.

The wanton extravagance and senseless wastefulness of many amongst English artisans, are, I believe, unparalleled in any other European country. It is a common occurrence in some places for men who are earning as much as 25s. to 35s. a week to apply to the clergyman, or board of guardians, for relief after being a fortnight out of work. And I have heard of far worse cases than these: of families earning 3*l.* and 4*l.* a week spending every farthing in eating and drinking, and begging shamefully after a week's want of work. The establishment of the Government Savings' Bank is one of the most powerful levers at work for the raising and educating of the artisan and labouring classes; any aid that you can give to the same principle in supporting your parish clothing, coal, &c. clubs is doubly well spent; for it assists the needy at the present, and encourages a spirit of thrift and prudence for the future.

As regards the third upon my list of begging letters, they come no doubt many of them from well-intentioned institutions; but here too some care is demanded. Not

a few of these societies are nothing more than schisms from old foundations; and some are even schisms dissevered from the first schismatical deposit. They remind one of the case of a Scotch servant, who, applying to a lady for a place, hoped that she would be allowed to attend her own place of worship. "Certainly; you belong to the *split*, then?" "No, m'm; I belong to the split after the split had split." These successive splits have really little claim upon our sympathy. Born in disunion, they have been nursed too often in the unwholesome atmosphere of faction, and slander, and quarrelling; from repulsive little brats they have grown into an uglier and more mischievous manhood, and so have in turn begotten a second generation punier and more worthless, but still more clamorous and importunate than their parents. We need not be deceived by the vulgar argument that a great many good men support them; a great many good men give their money to objects of which they know nothing, simply to deaden the incessant assault of applications. These societies are too often impostors. Look out the oldest societies for each specific object, and support those; and if assailed to assist

the others on the score that you might give more to that object, the reply is obvious: if you have more, you give it to the first society, and not to its illegitimate offspring. There is scarcely a charitable cause that has not two or three societies supporting it, wasting the alms of their subscribers with duplicate offices, duplicate officers, and a double organisation, and disgusting numbers of liberally disposed persons with applications for objects to which they have just subscribed.

A word or two about another large class which has sprung into great luxuriance in the last twenty years. This class of society—say for distressed washerwomen—selects the recipients of its bounty by the votes of its subscribers, every subscriber of 1*l.*, 10*s.*, or in some cases of 5*s.*, receiving a vote. If you want to be hunted perpetually for votes for distressed washerwomen, by all means subscribe your name and money too; if, however, you value your time and peace, subscribe, if you approve, to the charity, but don't let your left hand know what your right hand has subscribed. Indeed, the nuisance of this system has become so intolerable that steps are being taken by the managers of some of these charities to alter

the system of election to them altogether. It is said (but such systematic meanness is scarcely credible) that numbers of subscribers would fall off at once if their names did not appear duly registered, and so they may enjoy at times a letter from a real peeress canvassing for some poor dependent. What would Thackeray have said to this sublimity of British flunkeyism? One abuse of the system will be patent from the fact that it regularly costs about 25*l.* in writing and postage to secure votes in some of these societies for an annuity of perhaps 20*l.*, which, from the age of the candidate, is not worth more than five years' purchase.

Of many of the charitable societies—of the sisterhoods, for instance, the orphanages, homes for the destitute, hospitals, houses of refuge for the penitent, and many similar institutions,—which have been established within the last few years in many of our towns, it is impossible to speak except in terms of admiration and delight, and hopefulness for the country that has given birth to them. One I will mention particularly, because of its extreme simplicity. It is worked by men, is apparently independent of laws, exacts no particular dress, and pur-

poses to give not money so much as personal service to the poor; to visit them in their homes, assist them when needed, and report their cases to the clergyman of the parish. It is a cheering sign of the times to see many young men of good birth and high social position—officers of the Guards, not a few (so-called) idle men about London, business men who will make some spare odds and ends of time for this work—join in an association for becoming personally acquainted with the needs of the poor. It is ignorance rather than selfishness that is at the root of our worst social evils. It is quite one thing to read a thrilling account of misery and suffering in a leading article, and another thing to go and see the horrible details, and minister to these shocking wants in person. There is an appalling truth at the bottom of that silly parody,

“Whene’er I take my walks abroad,  
How many poor I see ;  
And ’cause I never speak to them,  
They never speak to me.”

And it is this: that between the life—comfortable, luxurious, refined, and intellectual—of the rich, and that of the poor—sordid and laborious, and often gross and vicious—there



is a great gulf fixed. Our intellectual pursuits, as well as our luxurious indulgences, tend to widen that gulf daily. All honour to any society that will try to bridge it; for it must be bridged otherwise than by the treacherous materials of self-interest. The weekly payment and receipt of wages will never do it. As in surgery, so here, sympathy alone will unite a fractured limb.

You are aware, no doubt, that the old charities, gifts left by will and distributed generally at Christmas, are very great throughout the country; but it may be a novelty to you to hear that in many, perhaps in a large majority of cases, they are a curse rather than a blessing; that the poor forestall them, claim them as a right, quarrel over them, lie and backbite for them, and then waste them; that these gifts demoralise and even pauperise parishes where they exist in large amounts; and finally, that a considerable fraction, perhaps as much as half, goes straight into the hands of owners of cottages in these (unhappily) endowed parishes. Brilliantly as the abominations of these uncharitable charities were exposed by Mr. Gladstone in a speech delivered a few years ago, these abuses might have been recounted

in fourfold abundance. I know a parish well where, of two contiguous and perfectly similar cottages, one will pay one-third more rent than the other. The highly-rented one is just within the boundary-line of the highly-endowed parish. The neighbouring parish, happily for its morality and industry, has no charities of any kind. Now in this, as in all abuses, there are hundreds, indeed thousands, interested. To sweep even the worst of them into a new channel, that should fertilise instead of withering all in its course, would be resisted to the death. The battle will, however, have to be fought, perhaps ere long. Don't be biased by any views of mine, but think the question carefully over by yourself; and when the time comes, act; you are sure to have an opportunity for action in some line or other.

I cannot better conclude than with the words of one who is old now, but during a long life has given largely, and now enjoys the happy recollection of acts of generous munificence: "Of all the money that I have given away in charity, none gives me more pleasure to remember than that which I have given to hospitals and schools. However greatly other charities may be, and are,

abused, these can hardly be amongst their number; for no one will get into a hospital who can keep out of it; and though our old grammar-schools are still mostly in a state of decrepitude, no modern school can arrive at that condition for some time at least. A child must learn something there; and every something there learnt is a guarantee against the abuse of that or any other school long after the time when I shall be dead and gone."

## XXII.

### A LITTLE LEARNING *NOT* A DANGEROUS THING.

ONE would be curious to discover the originator of the proverb which affirms that a little learning is dangerous. Was he an unsuccessful inventor in Dean Swift's inimitable University of Laputa? Or was it the fond parent who stoutly insisted that her dear boy should never enter the water until he could swim?

And yet it is not so very astonishing that so silly a saying, once published, should attain a certain circulation and notoriety. It has a degree of plausibility about it; it strikes one, at its first introduction, as being redolent of profound study and the midnight oil, and has therefore served again and again the purpose of a convenient mask for idleness to play behind; and yet, except on this score (which indeed would argue a vast amount of idleness in the world), a fallacy so transparent

as this ought not to have obtained as much credence as this has. Perhaps (like wearing spectacles) quoting such a proverb gives an air of depth and solidity of attainments; for assuredly, except as a fantasy, a spectral and not a real truth, it can hardly be believed in by a nation who in a thousand actions of their daily life display not so much a sceptical or hesitating belief in its truth as an absolute disbelief in it altogether.

There is an amusing anecdote in a little book called *Golden Deeds*, of an Irish girl going with her mistress to get some gunpowder out of a barrel in an attic. On descending, the mistress happily asked the maid what she had done with the candle. “Forgot it, m’m; left it stuck in *the barrel of black salt*.” Now, doubtless her mistress knew no more about gunpowder than its terrible explosive qualities. Perhaps not many of us are prepared to pass much of an examination even on its materials, still less on the relative proportion of those materials or their manufacture; but at any rate the lady’s little learning saved them (aided by considerable presence of mind) from the total annihilation which the maid’s want of a little learning had prepared for them. Of the two, there

can hardly be a doubt here as to which was the “dangerous thing.”

Now this anecdote may be taken as a fair sample of the experience of every-day life; of the vexatious troubles brought about by the unaccountable absence of a little learning. I am not afraid of having quoted to me the witty remark made by a clever lawyer on reading the title of a law-book, *Every Man his own Lawyer*—“Then he would have a fool for his client.” A little learning is just what is wanted to warn a man not to meddle with a profession he has not mastered. It does not need the wisdom of a Solomon to advise an untaught countryman not to venture on a battle with a practised pugilist. Let us take a few occasions in daily life where a little knowledge would be, as it has often been, of the very highest value.

The knowledge of the fact that the two main constituents of our food are carbon and starch can hardly be called profound. Nor, again, of this fact, that what nature demands for its main support is carbon in colder, and starch in warmer climates; that is to say, more animal food the nearer you approach the poles, and more vegetable the nearer you approach the equator. Now there is no doubt

that this little knowledge would be not dangerous, but most advantageous, to any young officer, or civilian, or merchant, starting for India, Burmah, China, and many other of our foreign possessions.

There are literally scores of anecdotes of the hunting- and the battle-field which tell us how often a very little knowledge of surgery or of medicine has assuaged pain, and indeed stayed the approach of death itself. The construction of an extempore tourniquet to close a severed artery is not a work of either genius or elaborate skill; it demands nothing but a stick, a stone, and a pocket-handkerchief or two; and yet how many valuable lives has this fragment, this shred of knowledge, preserved!

History tells us that the Marquis of Wellesley, while Governor-general of India, used to send despatches to those of his subordinates who were scholars enough to understand them written in pure Attic Greek. Tippoo Sahib was well known to have interpreters at his court of every modern European language, but ancient Attic was too much for them. Other despatches in various tongues had been intercepted and easily deciphered; these might be intercepted—that is the fate

of war—but not one ever gave up its secret.

But it may be objected, this surely is an instance of the utility of not a little, but a great deal of knowledge. The Governor-general still lives fresh in the memory of Eton as a most accomplished scholar; almost dearer to his old school on that account than as a distinguished statesman.

Hear, then, the following: I remember being shown, a short time after the Indian mutiny, a facsimile of a despatch which had been sent in a quill—the usual method in India—by Inglis to Havelock (undying names) respecting the best plan of entry into the walls of besieged Lucknow. Every proper name, both of place and person, was written in ancient Greek characters—the *characters* merely, there was not an attempt at expressing an idea in the Greek *language*; but by this simple expedient the message was made perfectly unintelligible to the army of the mutineers, had it fallen into their hands, while conveying the same information that English would have done to the general to whom it was addressed.

Of the blunders that are almost daily made from want of the most rudimentary



knowledge of art the newspapers all furnish frequent instances. A year or two ago an amusing instance came into court, when it appeared that some wealthy simpleton had purchased what he believed to be genuine pictures by Michael Angelo and Raphael, which were really copies of copies of their great originals, manufactured at so much the square foot in Manchester. Now even if he could not tell a picture from a daub, it would have required but a very little literary knowledge of art to be aware that the originals were in one or other of the great galleries or churches on the Continent—some, perhaps, that he had hurried past while accomplishing, as Englishmen will in their travels, the greatest amount of space in the smallest amount of time.

What anecdotes of ruinous blundering cannot builders tell, all arising from their employers' ignorance, not of details—that is the builder's business—but of the first idea or conception of the thing *house*! Despite the truth that medical science reiterates about light and sunshine being the first necessities of health, how many new houses are thoughtlessly built to face the north and north-east; though, if medical science had

been silent, the experience and example of the great builders of the Middle Ages might have made us wiser in our generation. You will find that, with hardly an exception, in our climate at least, the cathedral or huge monastery-church stood at the north side of the whole range of buildings, protecting the cloisters, refectory, and dormitory from the cold winds, and leaving them open to the warmth of the south. That this did not arise from an accidental or a conventional style of arrangement is clear from the fact that in Spain the cloister court is found on the north side of the church, for coolness.

I will add but one more illustration from building. The very simple law of capillary attraction is well known, by which bricks or any porous material will sop up water to any height; so that the floor and even the roof-timbers will be kept constantly damp if laid on bricks, which, again, are placed upon a damp soil; yet, despite this very simple and self-evident fact, how many houses are built by men regardless of the easy expedient of inserting a layer of slates in cement just below the lowest floor-timbers, so as to cut off the rising moisture once and for all!

Now as all wide-spread fallacies have

always been based upon a perverted or concealed truth, let us see what the grain of hidden truth is in this case. Is it not this? that a little knowledge, if you think it big when it really is little, is a dangerous thing? which in other words means this, that it is not the little knowledge that is dangerous at all, but your taking a false estimate of it. Now this truth is undeniable; but it is equally true that a proverb which demands so much explanation, so many *addenda et corrigenda*, is a very clumsy piece of workmanship indeed; and when to this you add the undeniable fact that it has been made the excuse for a multitude of sins of idleness, it does deserve the treatment that the jackdaw in the fable received, who decked himself out in the borrowed peacock plumes. In fact there are two distinct truths involved in this clumsy and pretentious apothegm, neither of which is, however, at all fully conveyed in it: the first of which is, "be modest about what you know;" and the second, "do not despise any knowledge, however slight or even fragmentary;" correct it if possible, and reclaim it from its fragmentary state into order and system if you can; but whether you can systematise it

or not, still be ever collecting knowledge from all quarters, acquire it through every avenue of information—through conversation no less than through books, through the eye no less than the ear. Much of Shakespeare's ripeness and extraordinary accuracy of knowledge must have come—as we know from his biography that Goethe's did—from observation of mechanics at their work, from noticing the conduct and language of workmen in their fields, in their ships, at their markets, in their churches, or in their shops. It is a part of an old, old truth, but capable of wider interpretation than it generally receives—*despise not small things*.

### XXIII.

#### HINTS ON THE STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE.

YOU tell me that, much as you wish it were otherwise, you find Shakespeare very heavy reading, and you heartily wish you could feel some of the intense admiration with which all Shakespeare readers speak of his works. You are convinced that the man whom Goethe and Coleridge illustrated and Schiller translated, whom all the greatest authors united in honouring, must indeed be great: and you tell me you have lately seen it noticed that the number of copies of Shakespeare taken out of the Manchester free library is greater than that of almost any other book; proving that not only the *literati*, the men who read Homer and Dante and Goethe, but that many of the artisan class delight in the works of him whom the Germans characteristically entitle “the myriad-minded.”

I will, then, in this letter, give you a

few hints—set up, so to say, a few finger-posts in the route for you to travel over; the route, or one very similar to it, that all must have travelled over to their goal; which is the delight inspired by the beauty and aptness of the language, the depth of thought, the delineation of feelings of awe and mirth, of love and phrensy, combined in one vast picture.

And first you should clearly understand that your difficulty is not unique in this particular. You could as little, without artistic and architectural study, comprehend a cathedral in all the grandeur of its design and the loveliness of its details, or a great picture in its variety of excellences, as you can comprehend one of Shakespeare's vast life-pictures: indeed the latter is the most difficult achievement of any; higher mental powers are taxed to comprehend such a play as *Hamlet* or *Lear* than are called into play to appreciate any art. And yet you would, I daresay, feel as helpless before, for instance, that grand picture of the Supper in Cana of Paul Veronese in the Louvre, where at the first glance we feel a dim sense of beauty, of lovely colour, of graceful form, of animated expression; but without some explanation, without some

acquired knowledge of art, we can hardly advance much further. But when we analyse the painting in detail, and know that the musicians (I take the foreground first) are portraits of the great painters of the day, including such names as Tintoret and Titian; the guests on the left of the picture are all portraits of the great monarchs of a period of great monarchs,—Charles the Fifth and Francis the First, and Solymán “the Magnificent,”—we begin to feel that there is an historical greatness in the work, independent of artistic worth. Add to this the skill with which the painter has represented the preparation for a feast on the gallery in the background, thus combining (in dramatic language) subordinate scenes with the main plot of the play. Add to this the skilful introduction of severe lines of architecture on either side, to act as foils to the graceful shapes and flowing robes of the feasters; then consider the masterly drawing, the rich and yet subdued colouring. Add to this again the life thrown into every detail, down to the cat sharpening its claws upon the embossed sides of a silver vase, and the leash of hounds, one of which pulls away from his sleepy fellow as it eagerly watches the cat. Add to

all this the solemn central figures;—and we then begin to appreciate the work by degrees in its fulness. Last of all, perhaps, you feel that, however many anachronisms there may be—Italian architecture, kingly guests, modern musical instruments in a sacred subject—yet it is a thoroughly perfect and complete picture, conveying the impression that thus He would have appeared amongst men at rich men's tables, had He come in later times: and as we remember this, the anachronism is but one of time; there is no unreality about it, even as a sacred picture; while the introduction of the peculiarities of the artist's own time vastly enhances the value of the picture in an historical and artistic point of view.

Apply this principle of study, of gradual comprehension, to a play of Shakespeare, and you will find, if I mistake not, that fully three readings of a play are required if you would really appreciate not “the beauties of Shakespeare,” but Shakespeare himself. The first reading, to master the difficulties of the language; the second, to comprehend each leading character singly; the third, to grasp the meaning and completeness of the play as a whole.



There is no need of entering now into the reasons why the mere text of Shakespeare is full of difficulties; but they arise mainly from two sources: 1st, language; 2dly, grammar.

It is confessedly impossible to understand an author unless you are perfectly acquainted with his language. Now if you really think that Shakespeare presents but few difficulties of language, pray undeceive yourself by running your eye down a good glossary of his words and phrases: the obsolete expressions alone are very numerous; and be sure that until you comprehend these as readily as you enter into the language of daily life, you can't really comprehend Shakespeare. The grammar is another difficulty; but this arises from a totally different cause, which is the closeness of the thought on the part of the speaker. If you have any doubts on this head, let me refer you to that famous speech of Macbeth's beginning, "To be thus is nothing;" and you will quickly change your opinion on this head also. I believe that these two difficulties alone are the greatest impediments to the interest that Shakespeare would otherwise create in the mind of every educated Englishman. They are really more serious

impediments, because they are often overlooked from being undervalued: scenes are consequently but half understood, all strength and life have evaporated, the portrait is like that in a blurred photograph, where you would hardly recognise even a well-known friend after the unskilful treatment he has undergone.

Now, next to understanding the phraseology and grammar of a play, which is in itself no light work, you should try and gain a distinct conception of the drift and meaning of each individual character. Therefore, as a second matter of study, I should say, take in turn each great character—say four or five in the play—and read their parts straight through, with only as much of the context as will throw light upon the single character you are studying. To make my meaning clearer: take, for instance, the first part of *King Henry IV.*—Knight's, or any good edition, will tell you at the beginning of the play in what acts and scenes each character appears:—take Hotspur; he first appears in act i. scene 3, where his character soon displays itself as bold, impetuous, irritable, inconsiderate, reckless of consequences, ready to beard the king to his face, and then

joining any intemperate scheme for revenge ; in act ii. scene 3, he is all ardour and excitement for the campaign, parrying his wife's attempts to discover the secret of his warlike preparations, scoffing at the faint-heartedness of those who are less impetuous than himself ; in act iii. scene 1, his reckless overbearing spirit leads him to insult the calm and dignified, but vain and superstitious Glendower, then quarrel with him about a few pounds'-worth of land, mock at his accomplishments, irritate to the last degree the man whose aid would be a mainstay in their treasonable enterprise ; and at the close of the scene his manners and language, rough and somewhat coarse, show the want of all real refinement beneath the brilliant display of courage, hardihood, and resolution ; and thus he continues on to the last. The consistency of his character will force itself upon your notice when you read these scenes consecutively. And when you have thus studied a few of the leading characters carefully and at length, you will be prepared for the last reading, which will then present the play before you as a whole.

There are two points of view from which a play of Shakespeare's may be regarded :

either as a work of art, or (which is the higher view still) as a practical lesson in the conduct of affairs in life ; and perhaps, in studying a play as a whole, you will do well to examine it from these two different points of view separately, at least in those plays that you make a systematic study of. And in studying a play as a work of art, you will notice the skill with which the author strikes the key-note of the coming plot in the first scene, however short that scene may be. In the play we have just been considering, the main plot is a most dangerous, though unsuccessful rebellion ; and in the first lines we see the coming tempest, the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, on the horizon. Then you will notice the skill with which the comic and the serious scenes are interwoven : the truthful picture of life there given, not all laughter, not all tears ; *L' Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* ever side by side, as Milton has embodied them for all time. And thus by these and similar observations you will soon be led to appreciate the greatness of the work as merely a work of art. But how much higher greatness do these plays disclose in gauging the powers and sounding the passions of mankind ! This, the highest

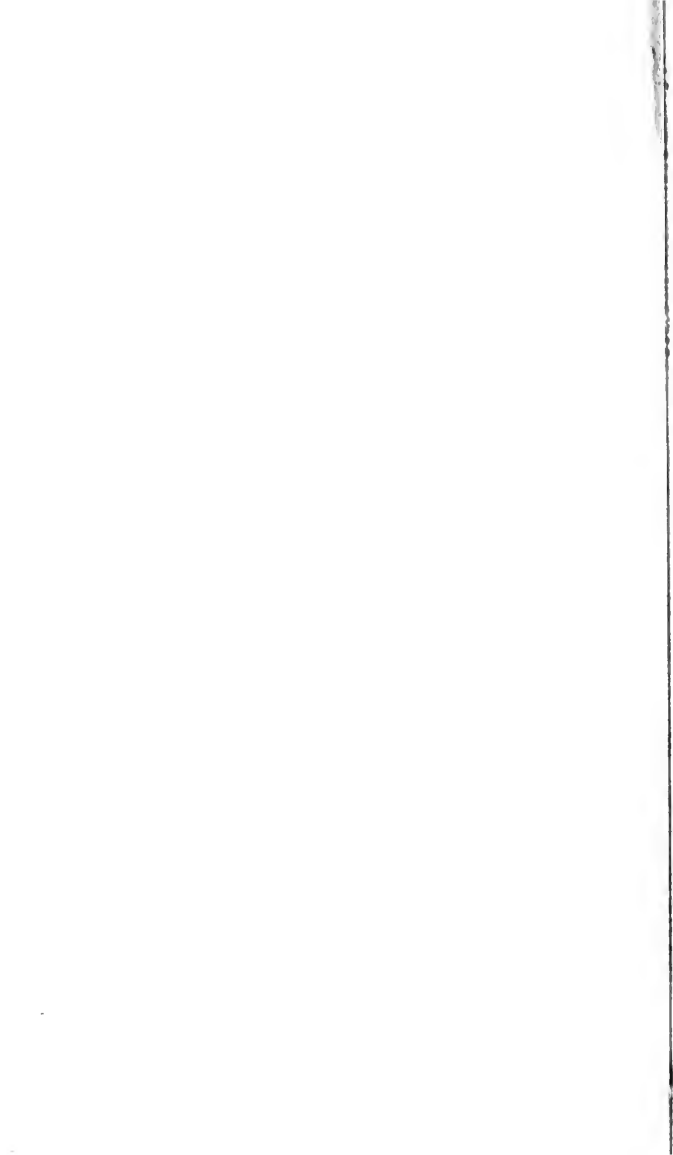
walk of criticism, you must not expect to tread early in your studies : it is only by slow degrees and enlarged knowledge of character that you will learn to appreciate the truths underlying often the lightest as well as the most serious scenes ; the deep insight into human nature in not one but a thousand varieties ; the strange apparent inconsistencies of the same character,—noble in one direction, commonplace and even sordid in another ; the noble Macbeth a murderer, while maxims of wisdom fall from the lips of the old dotard Polonius ; the natural consistency of a character with itself at different periods of life, though brought on the stage at only one of those periods : take, for instance, Justice Shallow, who appears only in age, a liar, drunkard, boaster, and fool : the natural conclusion to a youth which he describes himself as frivolous, idle, and debauched.

And lastly, consider the many and great lessons that each play conveys as a whole. The deadly poison of temptation once tampered with, its power to ruin a noble soul like Macbeth's ; the unbalanced judgment, and impotency of decision, the slavery to the impulse of the moment, in Richard II. : the

ruin of "ill-weaved ambition" in Hotspur and Wolsey; the loss of all peace coincident with the loss of faith in goodness in Othello; the total paralysis inflicted upon the highest intellectual powers by indecision and procrastination in Hamlet; the brutal ignorance and senseless inconsistency of mobs, the need that every one who thinks he stands should take heed to his falling, in Angelo; the close alliance between a life of sensuality on the one hand, and lying, boasting, slander, and all the meaner vices on the other, in Lucio, in the same play;—all these there are, and a thousand more lessons, expressed too in a spirit of the truest morality; no glozing over vice with specious words and sugared phrases; the old profligate Falstaff, with all his wit, is not only detected and exposed, but (what vice hates tenfold worse) baffled and ridiculed by the Merry Wives of Windsor. All this will become an open book to you, very easy to decipher at a glance, when you have once honestly toiled your way up the ascent; but here, as elsewhere, there is no royal road to learning. You must be perfectly acquainted with the language the poet employs, and be able to unravel his closest grammatical constructions; you must have

steadily studied individual characters, and mastered some of the earlier and easier plays, before you can unseal the riddle of the mystic book at a glance, and ever draw fresh streams from the ever-springing fountain, and learn the words of wisdom, and gain all the pleasure and enjoyment of reading, which is the lot of those to whom his characters are "familiar in their mouths as household words."

The End.





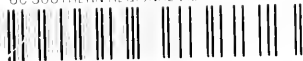


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